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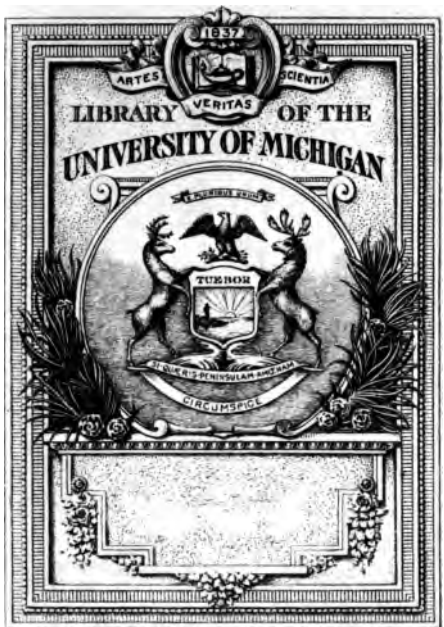
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WESTON FROM THE OUSE.

NEAR OLNEY.

THE LIFE AND WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER.

BY

ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ. L.L.D.

VOL. VI.

VIEW OF OLNEY, FROM THE ALCOVE

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OF

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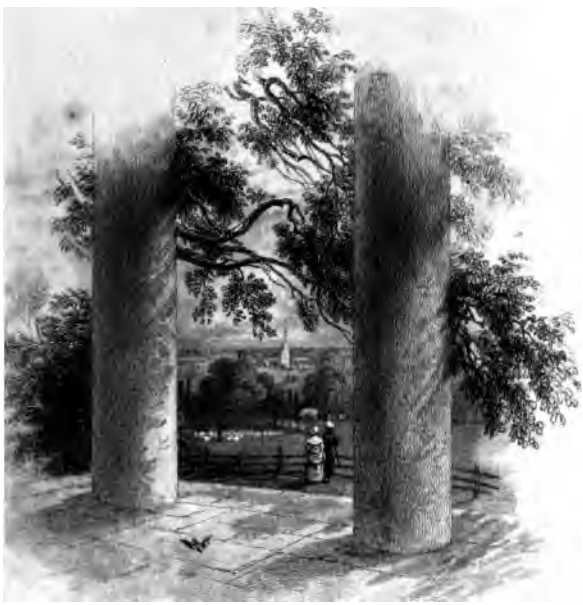

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THE

WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER, Esq.

COMPRISING

HIS POEMS,

CORRESPONDENCE, AND TRANSLATIONS.

WITH

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

BY THE EDITOR,

ROBERT SOUTHEY, Esq. LL. D.

POET LAUREATE, ETC.

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THE

LETTERS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

You are sometimes indebted to bad weather, but more frequently to a dejected state of mind, for my punctuality as a correspondent. This was the case when I composed that tragi-comical ditty for which you thank me: my spirits were exceedingly low, and having no fool or jester at hand, I resolved to be my own. The end was answered; I laughed myself, and I made you laugh. Sometimes I pour out my thoughts in a mournful strain; but these sable effusions your mother will not suffer me to send you, being resolved that nobody shall share with me the burthen of my melancholy but herself. In general you may suppose that I am remarkably sad when I seem remarkably merry. The effort we make to get rid of a load is usually violent in proportion to the weight of it. I have seen at Sadler's Wells a tight little fellow dancing with a fat man upon his shoulders; to those who looked at him, he seemed insensible of the encumbrance; but if a

physician had felt his pulse, when the feat was over, I suppose he would have found the effect of it there. Perhaps you remember the Undertakers' dance in the Rehearsal, which they perform in crape hat-bands and black cloaks, to the tune of "Hob or Nob," one of the sprightliest airs in the world. Such is my fiddling, and such is my dancing; but they serve a purpose which at some certain times could not be so effectually promoted by any thing else.

I am informed that Thelyphthora is at last encountered by a writer of abilities equal to the task. An answer to that base-born book was a grand desideratum in the world of literature. I call it so because it is the spurious issue of Scripture violated by misinterpretation. The mother is ashamed of the brat, and disowns it in every page; but the father, (a father is sometimes proud of his bastard,) dandles it upon his knee, and holds it up to the admiration of all beholders. This champion for the rights and honours of single marriage comes forth in the Monthly Review: I have not yet seen the first specimen of his performance, which belongs to October, but have ordered it down from London. The character I have received of it has pleased me much, and if I find it answer upon the perusal, I shall connect the detached parts of it, (for it is to be a work of some continuance,) and bind them up together. It is high time this false light should be extinguished: it has alarmed many families, misled many readers, and confirmed not a few in practices which their own consciences condemned, till that Siren song deceived them.—You will think perhaps I talk big for one that has never read it: but I am

acquainted with the principal hinges on which the whole depends, and am persuaded that one flash of truth would melt them. Mr. Riland of Birmingham sent into this country a string of twenty-seven printed queries, unanswerable he thinks, unless in such a way as must unavoidably induce a necessity of adopting Mr. Madan's plan. But being persuaded that even I was a match for such an enemy, I ventured upon the formidable task, and gave them twenty-seven answers. Indeed a child might have done the same, and I wonder less at the author's predilection in favour of his own conceptions, (which is a partiality natural enough,) than that he has found, and among ministers too, understanding so scantily enlightened, or so easily perverted.

I mourn with you over the tender conscience of your collector, whose peace of mind is so inconsistent with your interest, that he cannot think he does his duty unless he wrongs you. You think the man's meaning is good! you have a world of charity; what is it to him from whose purse the tax is taken? It is his business to gather it; when that is done, he has discharged his office. You are not quite so much like Falstaff, as he is like Mr. Dombledon, of whom Falstaff would have borrowed money, and when he refused to lend him any, the knight called him a rascally worsted stocking, yea, forsooth, knave. A tender conscience is always entitled to respect, but a scrupulous one deserves suspicion. The man may be very honest for aught I know; but I am sure you are so; and he ought to know that a man of your principles would not endeavour to force him upon a conduct incompatible with his oath.

I have endeavoured to comply with your request, though I am not good at writing upon a given subject. Your mother, however, comforts me by her approbation, and I steer myself in all that I produce by her judgement. If she does not understand me at the first reading, I am sure the lines are obscure, and always alter them; if she laughs, I know it is not without reason; and if she says, "that's well, it will do"—I have no fear lest any body else should find fault with it. She is my lord chamberlain, who licenses all I write.

TO MISS C——, ON HER BIRTH-DAY.

How many between east and west,
Disgrace their parent earth,
Whose days constrain us to detest
The day that gave them birth;

Not so when Stella's natal morn
Revolving months restore,
We can rejoice that she was born,
And wish her born once more!

If you like it, use it: if not, you know the remedy. It is serious, yet epigrammatic,—like a bishop at a ball!

W. C.

P. S. I have read the Review; it is learned and wise,
Clean, candid, and witty,—Thelyphthora dies.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM sensibly mortified at finding myself obliged to disappoint you; but though I have had many thoughts upon the subject you propose to my consideration, I

have had none that have been favourable to the undertaking. I applaud your purpose, for the sake of the principle from which it springs; but I look upon the evils you mean to animadvert upon, as too obstinate and inveterate ever to be expelled by the means you mention. The very persons to whom you would address your remonstrance, are themselves sufficiently aware of their enormity: years ago, to my knowledge, they were frequently the topics of conversation at polite tables; they have been frequently mentioned in both houses of parliament; and I suppose there is hardly a member of either who would not immediately assent to the necessity of reformation, were it proposed to him in a reasonable way. But there it stops; and there it will for ever stop, till the majority are animated with a zeal in which they are at present deplorably defective. A religious man is unfeignedly shocked, when he reflects upon the prevalence of such crimes; a moral man must needs be so in a degree, and will affect to be much more so than he is. But how many do you suppose there are among our worthy representatives that come under either of these descriptions? If all were such, yet to new model the police of the country, which must be done in order to make even unavoidable perjury less frequent, were a task they would hardly undertake, on account of the great difficulty that would attend it. Government is too much interested in the consumption of malt-liquor to reduce the number of venders. Such plausible pleas may be offered in defence of travelling on Sundays, especially by the trading part of the world, as the whole bench of bishops would find it difficult to overrule. And with

respect to the violation of oaths, till a certain name is more generally respected than it is at present, however such persons as yourself may be grieved at it, the legislature are never likely to lay it to heart. I do not mean, nor would by any means attempt to discourage you in so laudable an enterprise; but such is the light in which it appears to me, that I do not feel the least spark of courage qualifying or prompting me to embark in it myself. An exhortation therefore written by me,—by hopeless desponding me,—would be flat, insipid, and uninteresting; and disgrace the cause, instead of serving it. If after what I have said, however, you still retain the same sentiments, *Macte esto virtute tuâ;* there is nobody better qualified than yourself, and may your success prove that I despaired of it without a reason.

Adieu, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I WRITE under the impression of a difficulty not easily surmounted, the want of something to say. Letter-spinning is generally more entertaining to the writer than the reader: for your sake, therefore, I would avoid it, but a dearth of materials is very apt to betray one into a trifling strain, in spite of all one's endeavours to be serious.

What have you done with your perverse parishioner? Perhaps when he has put a lock upon his pew, he may shut himself up in it oftener than he used to do: you

remember a certain story about the boy and his trunk. The consciousness that the seat is become his own so emphatically that he can exclude every body else, may make him fond of it. I believe many a man that keeps a carriage, rides in it because he keeps one, though sometimes he would otherwise prefer a walk.

I lay by my paper for the present;—I really can go on no further.

I left off on Saturday, this present being Monday morning, and I renew the attempt, in hopes that I may possibly catch some subject by the end, and be more successful.

> So have I seen the maids in vain
> Tumble and tease a tangled skein:
> They bite the lip, they scratch the head,
> And cry—"The deuce is in the thread!"
> They torture it, and jerk it round,
> Till the right end at last is found;
> Then wind, and wind, and wind away,
> And what was work is changed to play.

When I wrote the two first lines, I thought I had engaged in a hazardous enterprise; for, thought I, should my poetical vein be as dry as my prosaic, I shall spoil the sheet, and send nothing at all; for I could on no account endure the thought of beginning again. But I think I have succeeded to admiration, and am willing to flatter myself that I have seen even a worse impromptu in the newspapers.

Though we live in a nook, and the world is quite unconscious that there are any such beings in it as ourselves, yet we are not unconcerned about what passes in it. The present awful crisis, big with the

fate of England, engages much of our attention. The action is probably over by this time, and though we know it not, the grand question is decided, whether the war shall roar in our own once peaceful fields, or whether we shall still only hear of it at a distance. I can compare the nation to no similitude more apt than that of an ancient castle that had been for days assaulted by the battering ram. It was long before the stroke of that engine made any sensible impression; but the continual repetition at length communicated a slight tremor to the wall; the next, and the next, and the next blow increased it. Another shock puts the whole mass in motion, from the top to the foundation: it bends forward, and is every moment driven farther from the perpendicular; till at last the decisive blow is given, and down it comes. Every million that has been raised within the last century, has had an effect upon the constitution like that of a blow from the aforesaid ram upon the aforesaid wall. The impulse becomes more and more important, and the impression it makes is continually augmented; unless, therefore, something extraordinary intervenes to prevent it,—you will find the consequence at the end of my simile.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

As I promised you verse, if you would send me a frank, I am not willing to return the cover without some, though I think I have already wearied you by the prolixity of my prose[1].

[1] Here followed his poem, the Lily and the Rose.

I must refer you to those unaccountable gaddings and caprices of the human mind, for the cause of this production; for in general I believe there is no man who has less to do with the ladies' cheeks than I have. I suppose it would be best to antedate it, and to imagine that it was written twenty years ago, for my mind was never more in a trifling butterfly trim than when I composed it, even in the earliest parts of my life. And what is worse than all this, I have translated it into Latin:—but that some other time.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

How apt we are to deceive ourselves where self is in question! you say I am in your debt, and I accounted you in mine; a mistake to which you must attribute my arrears, if indeed I owe you any, for I am not backward to write where the uppermost thought is welcome.

I am obliged to you for all the books you have occasionally furnished me with: I did not indeed read many of Johnson's Classics; those of established reputation are so fresh in my memory, though many years have intervened since I made them my companions, that it was like reading what I read yesterday over again: and as to the minor Classics, I did not think them worth reading at all;—I tasted most of them, and did not like them. It is a great thing to be indeed a poet, and does not happen to more than one man in

a century. Churchill, the great Churchill, deserved the name of poet: I have read him twice, and some of his pieces three times over, and the last time with more pleasure than the first. The pitiful scribbler of his life seems to have undertaken that task, for which he was entirely unqualified, merely because it afforded him an opportunity to traduce him. He has inserted in it but one anecdote of consequence, for which he refers you to a novel, and introduces the story with doubts about the truth of it. But his barrenness as a biographer I could forgive, if the simpleton had not thought himself a judge of his writings, and under the erroneous influence of that thought, informed his reader that Gotham, Independence, and the Times, were catchpennies. Gotham, unless I am a greater blockhead than he, which I am far from believing, is a noble and beautiful poem, and a poem with which I make no doubt the author took as much pains as with any he ever wrote. Making allowance, (and Dryden in his Absalom and Achitophel stands in need of the same indulgence,) for an unwarrantable use of Scripture, it appears to me to be a masterly performance. Independence is a most animated piece, full of strength and spirit, and marked with that bold masculine character which, I think, is the great peculiarity of this writer. And the Times, (except that the subject is disgusting to the last degree,) stands equally high in my opinion. He is indeed a careless writer for the most part; but where shall we find in any of those authors who finish their works with the exactness of a Flemish pencil, those bold and daring strokes of fancy, those numbers so hazardously ventured upon and so

happily finished, the matter so compressed and yet so clear, and the colouring so sparingly laid on, and yet with such a beautiful effect? In short, it is not his least praise that he is never guilty of those faults as a writer, which he lays to the charge of others. A proof that he did not judge by a borrowed standard, or from rules laid down by critics, but that he was qualified to do it by his own native powers, and his great superiority of genius. For he that wrote so much, and so fast, would through inadvertency and hurry unavoidably have departed from rules which he might have found in books, but his own truly poetical talent was a guide which could not suffer him to err. A race-horse is graceful in his swiftest pace, and never makes an awkward motion though he is pushed to his utmost speed. A cart-horse might perhaps be taught to play tricks in the riding-school, and might prance and curvet like his betters, but at some unlucky time would be sure to betray the baseness of his original. It is an affair of very little consequence perhaps to the well-being of mankind, but I cannot help regretting that he died so soon. Those words of Virgil, upon the immature death of Marcellus, might serve for his epitaph:

> "*Ostendent terris hunc tantum fata, neque ultra*
> *Esse sinent.*"

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, Aug. 31, 1786.

I BEGAN to fear for your health, and every day said to myself,—I must write to Bagot soon, if it be only to ask him how he does,—a measure that I should certainly have pursued long since had I been less absorbed in Homer than I am. But such are my engagements in that quarter, that they make me, I think, good for little else.

Many thanks, my friend, for the names that you have sent me. The Bagots will make a most conspicuous figure among my subscribers, and I shall not, I hope, soon forget my obligations to them.

The unacquaintedness of modern ears with the divine harmony of Milton's numbers, and the principles upon which he constructed them, is the cause of the quarrel that they have with elisions in blank verse. But where is the remedy? In vain should you or I, and a few hundreds more perhaps who have studied his versification, tell them of the superior majesty of it, and that for that majesty it is greatly indebted to those elisions. In their ears, they are discord and dissonance; they lengthen the line beyond its due limits, and are therefore not to be endured. There is a whimsical inconsistence in the judgement of modern readers in this particular. Ask them all round, whom do you account the best writer of blank verse? and they will reply to a man, Milton, to be sure; Milton against the field! Yet if a writer of the present day should construct his numbers exactly upon Milton's plan, not one in fifty of these professed admirers of

Milton would endure him. The case standing thus, what is to be done? An author must either be contented to give disgust to the generality, or he must humour them by sinning against his own judgement. This latter course, so far as elisions are concerned, I have adopted as essential to my success. In every other respect I give as much variety in my measure as I can, I believe I may say as in ten syllables it is possible to give, shifting perpetually the pause and cadence, and accounting myself happy that modern refinement has not yet enacted laws against this also. If it had, I protest to you I would have dropped my design of translating Homer entirely; and with what an indignant stateliness of reluctance I make them the concession that I have mentioned, Mrs. Unwin can witness, who hears all my complaints upon the subject.

After having lived twenty years at Olney, we are on the point of leaving it, but shall not migrate far. We have taken a house in the village of Weston. Lady Hesketh is our good angel, by whose aid we are enabled to pass into a better air, and a more walkable country. The imprisonment that we have suffered here for so many winters has hurt us both. That we may suffer it no longer, she stoops to Olney, lifts us from our swamp, and sets us down on the elevated grounds of Weston Underwood. There, my dear friend, I shall be happy to see you, and to thank you in person for all your kindness.

I do not wonder at the judgement that you form of Fuseli, a foreigner; but you may assure yourself that, foreigner as he is, he has an exquisite taste in English verse. The man is all fire, and an enthusiast in the highest degree on the subject of Homer, and

has given me more than once a jog, when I have been inclined to nap with my author. No cold water is to be feared from him that might abate my own fire, rather perhaps too much combustible.

Adieu! *mon ami*, yours faithfully,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Olney, Sept. 24, 1786.

So interesting a concern as your tutorship of the young gentleman in question cannot have been so long in a state of indecision without costing you much anxiety. We have sympathised with you under it all, but are glad to be informed that the long delay is not chargeable upon Mr. Hornby. Bishops are κακα θηρια, γαστερες αργοι.—You have heard, I know, from Lady Hesketh, and she has exculpated me from all imputation of wilful silence, from which, indeed, of yourself you are so good as to discharge me, in consideration of my present almost endless labour. I have nothing to say in particular on the subject of Homer, except that I am daily advancing in the work with all the dispatch that a due concern for my own credit in the result will allow.

You have had your troubles, and we ours. This day three weeks your mother received a letter from Mr. Newton, which she has not yet answered, nor is likely to answer hereafter. It gave us both much concern, but her more than me; I suppose because my mind being necessarily occupied in my work, I had not so much leisure to browze upon the wormwood that it contained. The purport of it is a direct accusation of me, and of her an accusation implied, that we

have both deviated into forbidden paths, and lead a life unbecoming the Gospel. That many of my friends in London are grieved, and the simple people of Olney astonished; that he never so much doubted of my restoration to Christian privileges as now;—in short, that I converse too much with people of the world, and find too much pleasure in doing so. He concludes with putting your mother in mind that there is still an intercourse between London and Olney; by which he means to insinuate that we cannot offend against the decorum that we are bound to observe, but the news of it will most certainly be conveyed to him. We do not at all doubt it;—we never knew a lie hatched at Olney that waited long for a bearer; and though we do not wonder to find ourselves made the subjects of false accusation in a place ever fruitful of such productions, we do and must wonder a little, that he should listen to them with so much credulity. I say this, because if he had heard only the truth, or had believed no more than the truth, he would not, I think, have found either me censurable or your mother. And that *she* should be suspected of irregularities is the more wonderful, (for wonderful it would be at any rate,) because she sent him not long before a letter conceived in such strains of piety and spirituality as ought to have convinced him that she at least was no wanderer. But what is the fact, and how do we spend our [time] in reality? What are the deeds for which we have been represented as thus criminal? Our present course of life differs in nothing from that which we have both held these thirteen years, except that, after great civilities shown us, and many advances made

on the part of the Throcks, we visit them. That we visit also at Gayhurst; that we have frequently taken airings with my cousin in her carriage; and that I have sometimes taken a walk with her on a Sunday evening and sometimes by myself, which however your mother has never done. These are the only novelties in our practice; and if by these procedures, so inoffensive in themselves, we yet give offence, offence must needs be given. God and our own consciences acquit us, and we acknowledge no other judges.

The two families with whom we have kicked up this astonishing intercourse are as harmless in their conversation and manners as can be found any where. And as to my poor cousin, the only crime that she is guilty of against the people of Olney is, that she has fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and administered comfort to the sick;—except indeed that, by her great kindness, she has given us a little lift in point of condition and circumstances, and has thereby excited envy in some who have not the knack of rejoicing in the prosperity of others. And this I take to be the root of the matter.

My dear William, I do not know that I should have teased your nerves and spirits with this disagreeable theme, had not Mr. Newton talked of applying to you for particulars. He would have done it, he says, when he saw you last, but had not time. You are now qualified to inform him as minutely as we ourselves could of all our enormities! Adieu!

Our sincerest love to yourself and yours,

WM. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

THE fish happening to swim uppermost in my mind, I give it the precedence, and begin with returning our thanks for it, not forgetting the circumstance of free carriage. Upon the whole, I think this a handsomer way of acknowledging a present than to tuck it into a postscript.

I find the Register in all respects an entertaining medley; but especially in this, that it has brought to my view some long forgotten pieces of my own production;—I mean by the way two or three. These I have marked with my own initials, and you may be sure I found them peculiarly agreeable, as they had not only the grace of being mine, but that of novelty likewise to recommend them. It is at least twenty years since I saw them. You, I think, was never a dabbler in rhyme. I have been one ever since I was fourteen years of age, when I began with translating an elegy of Tibullus. I have no more right to the name of a poet, than a maker of mouse-traps has to that of an engineer; but my little exploits in this way have at times amused me so much, that I have often wished myself a good one. Such a talent in verse as mine is like a child's rattle,—very entertaining to the trifler that uses it, and very disagreeable to all beside. But it has served to rid me of some melancholy moments, for I only take it up as a gentleman performer does his fiddle. I have this peculiarity belonging to me as a rhymist, that though I am charmed to a great degree with my own work, while it is on the anvil, I

can seldom bear to look at it when it is once finished. The more I contemplate it, the more it loses of its value, till I am at last quite disgusted with it. I then throw it by, take it up again perhaps ten years after, and am as much delighted with it as at first.

Few people have the art of being agreeable when they talk of themselves; if you are not weary therefore by this time you pay me a high compliment.

I dare say Miss S—— was much diverted with the conjecture of her friends. The true key to the pleasure she found at Olney was plain enough to be seen, but they chose to overlook it. She brought with her a disposition to be pleased, which whoever does is sure to find a visit agreeable, because they make it so.

Yours,

W. C[1].

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, Oct. 6, 1786.

You have not heard, I suppose, that the ninth book of my translation is at the bottom of the Thames. But it is even so. A storm overtook it in its way to Kingston, and it sunk, together with the whole cargo of the boat in which it was a passenger;—not figuratively foreshowing, I hope, by its submersion, the fate of all

[1] This dateless letter, which is probably entitled to a very early place in this collection, was reserved to close the correspondence with Mr. Unwin, from the hope that, before the press advanced so far, the editor might recover those unknown verses of Cowper, to which the letter alludes; but all researches for this purpose have failed. HAYLEY.

the rest. My kind and generous cousin, who leaves nothing undone that she thinks can conduce to my comfort, encouragement, or convenience, is my transcriber also. *She* wrote the copy, and *she* will have to write it again——*Hers* therefore is the damage. I have a thousand reasons to lament that the time approaches when we must lose her. She has made a winterly summer a most delightful one, but the winter itself we must spend without her.

W. C.[1]

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston Underwood, Nov. 17, 1786.

My usual time of answering your letters having been unavoidably engrossed by occasions that would not be thrust aside, I have been obliged to postpone the payment of my debt for a whole week. Even now it is not without some difficulty that I discharge it; which you will easily believe, when I tell you that this is only the second day that has seen us inhabitants of our new abode. When God speaks to a chaos, it becomes a scene of order and harmony in a moment; but when his creatures have thrown one house into confusion by leaving it, and another by tumbling themselves and their goods into it, not less than many days' labour and contrivance is necessary to give them their proper places. And it belongs to furniture of all kinds, however convenient it may be in its place, to

[1] In this interval, viz. on the 15th of the following month, the day on which he completed his fifty-fifth year (O. S.) Cowper removed to Weston Underwood.

be a nuisance out of it. We find ourselves here in a comfortable dwelling. Such it is in itself; and my cousin, who has spared no expense in dressing it up for us, has made it a genteel one. Such, at least, it will be when its contents are a little harmonized. She left us on Tuesday, and on Wednesday, in the evening, Mrs. Unwin and I took possession. I could not help giving a last look to my old prison and its precincts; and though I cannot easily account for it, having been miserable there so many years, felt something like a heart-ache when I took my last leave of a scene, that certainly in itself had nothing to engage affection. But I recollected that I had once been happy there, and could not, without tears in my eyes, bid adieu to a place in which God had so often found me. The human mind is a great mystery; mine, at least, appeared to me to be such upon this occasion. I found that I not only had a tenderness for that ruinous abode, because it had once known me happy in the presence of God; but that even the distress I had suffered for so long a time, on account of his absence, had endeared it to me as much. I was weary of every object, had long wished for a change, yet could not take leave without a pang at parting. What consequences are to attend our removal, God only knows. I know well that it is not in situation to effect a cure of melancholy like mine. The change, however, has been entirely a providential one; for much as I wished it, I never uttered that wish, except to Mrs. Unwin. When I learned that the house was to be let, and had seen it, I had a strong desire that Lady Hesketh should take it for herself, if she should happen to like the country.

That desire, indeed, is not exactly fulfilled; and yet, upon the whole, is exceeded. We are the tenants; but she assures us that we shall often have her for a guest; and here is room enough for us all. You, I hope, my dear friend, and Mrs. Newton, will want no assurances to convince you that you will always be received here with the sincerest welcome. More welcome than you have been, you cannot be; but better accommodated you may and will be.

I have not proceeded thus far without many interruptions, and though my paper is small, shall be obliged to make my letter still smaller. Our own removal is I believe the only news of Olney. Concerning this you will hear much, and much I doubt not that will have no truth in it. It is already reported there, and has been indeed for some time, that I am turned Papist. You will know how to treat a lie like this which proves nothing but the malignity of its author; but other tales you may possibly hear that will not so readily refute themselves. This, however, I trust you will always find true, that neither Mrs. Unwin nor myself shall have so conducted ourselves in our new neighbourhood, as that you shall have any occasion to be grieved on our account.

Mr. Unwin has been ill of a fever at Winchester, but by a letter from Mr. Thornton we learn that he is recovering, and hopes soon to travel. His Mrs. Unwin has joined him at that place.

Adieu, my dear friend. Mrs. Unwin's affectionate remembrances and mine conclude me ever yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston Lodge, Nov. 26, 1786.

It is my birthday, my beloved cousin, and I determine to employ a part of it, that it may not be destitute of festivity, in writing to you. The dark, thick fog that has obscured it, would have been a burthen to me at Olney, but here I have hardly attended to it. The neatness and snugness of our abode compensate all the dreariness of the season, and whether the ways are wet or dry, our house at least is always warm and commodious. Oh for you, my cousin, to partake these comforts with us! I will not begin already to tease you upon that subject, but Mrs. Unwin remembers to have heard from your own lips, that you hate London in the spring. Perhaps therefore by that time, you may be glad to escape from a scene which will be every day growing more disagreeable, that you may enjoy the comforts of the lodge. You well know that the best house has a desolate appearance unfurnished. This house accordingly, since it has been occupied by us and our *meubles*, is as much superior to what it was when you saw it, as you can imagine. The parlour is even elegant. When I say that the parlour is elegant, I do not mean to insinuate that the study is not so. It is neat, warm, and silent, and a much better study than I deserve, if I do not produce in it an incomparable translation of Homer. I think every day of those lines of Milton, and congratulate myself on having obtained, before I am quite superannuated, what he seems not to have hoped for sooner:

" And may at length my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage!"

For if it is not an hermitage, at least it is a much better thing; and you must always understand, my dear, that when poets talk of cottages, hermitages, and such like things, they mean a house with six sashes in front, two comfortable parlours, a smart stair-case, and three bedchambers of convenient dimensions; in short, exactly such a house as this.

The Throckmortons continue the most obliging neighbours in the world. One morning last week, they both went with me to the cliff;—a scene, my dear, in which you would delight beyond measure, but which you cannot visit except in the spring or autumn. The heat of summer, and the clinging dirt of winter would destroy you. What is called the cliff, is no cliff, nor at all like one, but a beautiful terrace, sloping gently down to the Ouse, and from the brow of which, though not lofty, you have a view of such a valley as makes that which you see from the hills near Olney, and which I have had the honour to celebrate, an affair of no consideration.

Wintry as the weather is, do not suspect that it confines me. I ramble daily, and every day change my ramble. Wherever I go, I find short grass under my feet, and when I have travelled perhaps five miles, come home with shoes not at all too dirty for a drawing-room. I was pacing yesterday under the elms, that surround the field in which stands the great alcove, when lifting my eyes I saw two black genteel figures bolt through a hedge into the path where I was walking. You guess already who they were, and that

they could be nobody but our neighbours. They had seen me from a hill at a distance, and had traversed a great turnip-field to get at me. You see therefore, my dear, that I am in some request. Alas! in too much request with some people. The verses of Cadwallader have found me at last.

I am charmed with your account of our little cousin[1] at Kensington. If the world does not spoil him hereafter, he will be a valuable man.

Good night, and may God bless thee.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Dec. 4, 1786.

It distresses me to think that this cannot reach you before the newspapers will inform you of the death of our dear friend at Winchester, an event for which after the favourable accounts I sent you, you cannot be but indifferently prepared. Those accounts however were such as we received ourselves, and were well warranted at the time when they were sent to us, by such appearances as seemed to afford the most reasonable hope of his recovery. A sudden turn in his distemper has, nevertheless, baffled that hope, and has in a few moments bereaved us, respecting poor Unwin, of every consolation, except the invaluable certainty of his being thither gone whence none who loved him as he deserved can deliberately wish him to return. Instead of saying more, my dear, on this melancholy subject, I will subjoin a copy of Mr. Henry Thorn-

[1] Lord Cowper.

ton's last letter, which we received this morning. It came accompanied by another which ought to have reached us by the preceding post, but which being delayed by some accident, came with it. Poor Mrs. Unwin you will suppose is in great affliction, but she bears her severe heart-aches with a resignation to the will of God, that does him and herself honour. She sends her love to you. Here follows the letter.—

MADAM,

I wrote you a discouraging letter yesterday, which my fears for Mr. Unwin very naturally suggested even at the time when I wrote it. My letter was written on Tuesday evening. His fever was then unabated, though he was free from pain, clear and distinct in his head and recollection, and more composed than he had been at almost any period of his illness. On Tuesday night, seeing no very certain and instant danger, I prevailed on Mrs. Unwin to lie down for a few hours while the physician and I sat up with him. About three in the morning I had about half an hour's very comfortable conversation with him alone. He was as sensible of his danger as I could be, and as calm and collected as ever he was in his life; mentioned many of his friends, to whom he desired to be remembered, and particularly named yourself, as well as Mr. Cowper and Lady Hesketh. He talked even of his own interment, and of every thing that it might be useful to me (as a joint-executor with his wife) to know. He desired me to read a prayer to him, and one or two psalms. The hope he expressed of eternal happiness was a very humble one, (as indeed it always

has been,) but to his friends by no means therefore the less sure. His mind was calm upon this and every other subject. He asked me if there were no hopes at all of his recovery; to which I answered him, that there were little or none. He continued therefore perfectly sensible of his own dissolution for several hours after, and was so calm and so little dismayed, that those around him who knew the irritability of his habit and his fears on this as well as every affecting subject, were much comforted during their attention to him. About seven in the morning Mrs. Unwin came down to him, while I lay down for an hour or two. He was still sensible. Between ten and eleven his head seemed a little confused, but no other alteration appeared. In half an hour after, his doctor from Salisbury went up to see him, and he desired to be raised in his bed as usual, but as he seemed, while they raised him to breathe rather harder than before, the doctor hinted to me that I should lead Mrs. Unwin (who had helped to raise him) out of the room; and in a few minutes his breath gradually spent itself without any appearance of struggle.

This, my dear, is not the end of the letter, but it is all that relates to the death-bed circumstances of this valuable man. The disorder that was immediately followed by these dying symptoms was in his bowels, and seized him, I think, the day before his decease. It did not indeed last many hours, but seems to have left him perfectly exhausted. The fever was a putrid one. Mr. Thornton caught it first, but being stronger soon recovered. Poor Unwin fell its victim. What

we must do now, my dear, for a tutor to little Hesketh I know not. My stock of recommendation was soon exhausted. Mr. Hornby will be himself, I suppose, the likeliest person to find a third. Surely there was never any thing more extraordinary than the deaths of two, chosen with such religious attention to their qualifications, just before they could enter on their office. Man boasts himself wise, yet to man is every thing inscrutable.

The chairs lie still in the warehouse of the inn at Smithfield. We sent this morning to enquire after them, and Rogers the Great knows nought about them. We must hope for them next week. Mr. Newton writes me word that they are at this time doing me the honour to read my Task at Freemasons' Hall. It could not have a more effectual advertisement, nor one more likely to occasion a speedy call for a third edition. Perhaps it may have the fate of John Gilpin, who was little known or noticed for a long time after his first appearance, and then made noise enough. I have a letter from a Mr. Biddlecombe of Somerford, near Christ Church, in the New Forest, expressive of the pleasure that my volumes have given to him, and inviting me to visit him, if I should ever find myself in that part of Hampshire. I answer it by this post. You shall see it, my dear, as soon as I can send it franked. I am obliged also to write to Mr. H. Thornton by this post, which occasions you a shorter letter; but I have still something to say. I have finished the twelfth book, and when Mr. Throckmorton and I were walking together on Friday morning, I told him that I had a design to call upon Mrs. T. for

her obliging and kind offer made me last summer. He immediately recollected it, and said with a smile —"You mean, I suppose, to transcribe for you? She will do it with great pleasure."—The next morning I sent her that same twelfth book, and understand that she has been hard at work. Unfortunately they leave the country on Tuesday, so that she will not be able, I suppose, to finish. She told me however this minute, when she stopped on horseback at the gate, that she had transcribed eleven pages. He was with me when she called, and they are gone together to Gayhurst.

Adieu, my precious! I am going to refresh myself with air and sunshine this fine morning, having been imprisoned all yesterday by the rain.

Ever your affectionate

WM. COWPER.

We shall be forced to trouble you, my coz, on this sad occasion. Mrs. U. begs that you will be so kind as to let Mrs. Eaton make her up two mourning caps. The only two persons who could make them at Olney lie in, or are just on the point of it. And I am in want of a pair of black shoe-buckles.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 4, 1786.

I SENT you, my dear, a melancholy letter, and I do not know that I shall now send you one very unlike it. Not that any thing occurs in consequence of our late loss more afflictive than was to be expected, but the

mind does not perfectly recover its tone after a shock like that which has been felt so lately. This I observe, that though my experience has long since taught me, that this world is a world of shadows, and that it is the more prudent, as well as the more Christian course to possess the comforts that we find in it, as if we possessed them not, it is no easy matter to reduce this doctrine into practice. We forget that that God who gave them, may, when he pleases, take them away; and that perhaps it may please him to take them at a time when we least expect, or are least disposed to part from them. Thus it has happened in the present case. There never was a moment in Unwin's life, when there seemed to be more urgent want of him than the moment in which he died. He had attained to an age when, if they are at any time useful, men become useful to their families, their friends, and the world. His parish began to feel, and to be sensible of the advantages of his ministry. The clergy around him were many of them awed by his example. His children were thriving under his own tuition and management, and his eldest boy is likely to feel his loss severely, being by his years in some respect qualified to understand the value of such a parent; by his literary proficiency too clever for a schoolboy, and too young at the same time for the university. The removal of a man in the prime of life of such a character, and with such connexions, seems to make a void in society that can never be filled. God seemed to have made him just what he was, that he might be a blessing to others, and when the influence of his character and abilities began to be felt, removed him.

These are mysteries, my dear, that we cannot contemplate without astonishment, but which will nevertheless be explained hereafter, and must in the mean time be revered in silence. It is well for his mother, that she has spent her life in the practice of an habitual acquiescence in the dispensations of Providence, else I know that this stroke would have been heavier, after all that she has suffered upon another account, than she could have borne. She derives, as she well may, great consolation from the thought that he lived the life, and died the death of a Christian. The consequence is, if possible, more unavoidable than the most mathematical conclusion, that therefore he is happy. So farewell, my friend Unwin! the first man for whom I conceived a friendship after my removal from St. Alban's, and for whom I cannot but still continue to feel a friendship, though I shall see thee with these eyes no more.

W. C.

TO ROBERT SMITH, ESQ.

Weston Underwood, near Olney,
MY DEAR SIR, Dec. 9, 1786.

We have indeed suffered a great loss by the death of our friend Unwin; and the shock that attended it was the more severe, as till within a few hours of his decease there seemed to be no very alarming symptoms. All the accounts that we received from Mr. Henry Thornton, who acted like a true friend on the occasion, and with a tenderness toward all concerned, that

does him great honour, encouraged our hopes of his recovery; and Mrs. Unwin herself found him on her arrival at Winchester so cheerful, and in appearance so likely to live, that her letter also seemed to promise us all that we could wish on the subject. But an unexpected turn in his distemper, which suddenly seized his bowels, dashed all our hopes, and deprived us almost immediately of a man whom we must ever regret. His mind having been from his infancy deeply tinctured with religious sentiments, he was always impressed with a sense of the importance of the great change of all; and on former occasions, when at any time he found himself indisposed, was consequently subject to distressing alarms and apprehensions. But in this last instance, his mind was from the first composed and easy; his fears were taken away, and succeeded by such a resignation as warrants us in saying, "that God made all his bed in his sickness." I believe it is always thus, where the heart, though upright toward God, as Unwin's assuredly was, is yet troubled with the fear of death. When death indeed comes, he is either welcome, or at least has lost his sting.

I have known many such instances; and his mother, from the moment that she learned with what tranquillity he was favoured in his illness, for that very reason expected that it would be his last. Yet not with so much certainty, but that the favourable accounts of him at length, in a great measure, superseded that persuasion.

She begs me to assure you, my dear sir, how sensible she is, as well as myself, of the kindness of your inquiries. She suffers this stroke, not with more

patience and submission than I expected, for I never knew her hurried by any affliction into the loss of either, but in appearance at least, and at present, with less injury to her health than I apprehended. She observed to me, after reading your kind letter, that though it was a proof of the greatness of her loss, it yet afforded her pleasure, though a melancholy one, to see how much her son had been loved and valued by such a person as yourself.

Mrs. Unwin wrote to her daughter-in-law, to invite her and the family hither, hoping that a change of scene, and a situation so pleasant as this, may be of service to her; but we have not yet received her answer. I have good hope however that, great as her affliction must be, she will yet be able to support it, for she well knows whither to resort for consolation.

The virtues and amiable qualities of our friends are the things for which we most wish to keep them, but they are on the other hand the very things that in particular ought to reconcile us to their departure. We find ourselves sometimes connected with, and engaged in affection too, to a person of whose readiness and fitness for another life we cannot have the highest opinion. The death of such men has a bitterness in it, both to themselves and survivors, which, thank God! is not to be found in the death of Unwin.

I know, my dear sir, how much you valued him, and I know also how much he valued you. With respect to him, all is well; and of you, if I should survive you, which perhaps is not very probable, I shall say the same.

In the mean time, believe me with the warmest wishes

for your health and happiness, and with Mrs. Unwin's affectionate respects,

Yours, my dear sir,
Most faithfully,
W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, Dec. 9, 1786.

I AM perfectly sure that you are mistaken, though I do not wonder at it, considering the singular nature of the event, in the judgement that you form of poor Unwin's death, as it affects the interest of his intended pupil. When a tutor was wanted for him, you sought out the wisest and best man for the office within the circle of your connexions. It pleased God to take him home to himself. Men eminently wise and good are very apt to die, because they are fit to do so. You found in Unwin a man worthy to succeed him; and He, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, seeing no doubt that Unwin was ripe for a removal into a better state, removed him also. The matter viewed in this light seems not so wonderful as to refuse all explanation, except such as in a melancholy moment you have given to it. And I am so convinced that the little boy's destiny had no influence at all in hastening the death of his tutors elect, that were it not impossible on more accounts than one that I should be able to serve him in that capacity, I would without the least fear of dying a moment the sooner, offer myself to that office; I would even do it, were I conscious of the same fitness for another and a better

state, that I believe them to have been both endowed with: in that case, I perhaps might die too, but if I should, it would not be on account of that connexion. Neither, my dear, had your interference in the business any thing to do with the catastrophe. Your whole conduct in it must have been acceptable in the sight of God, as it was directed by principles of the purest benevolence.

I have not touched Homer to-day. Yesterday was one of my terrible seasons, and when I arose this morning, I found that I had not sufficiently recovered myself to engage in such an occupation. Having letters to write, I the more willingly gave myself a dispensation. Good night.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Dec. 9, 1786.

We had just begun to enjoy the pleasantness of our new situation, to find at least as much comfort in it as the season of the year would permit, when affliction found us out in our retreat, and the news reached us of the death of Mr. Unwin. He had taken a western tour with Mr. Henry Thornton, and in his return, at Winchester, was seized with a putrid fever, which sent him to his grave. He is gone to it, however, though young, as fit for it as age itself could have made him; regretted indeed, and always to be regretted by those who knew him, for he had every thing that makes a man valuable both in his principles and in his man-

ners, but leaving still this consolation to his surviving friends, that he was desirable in this world chiefly because he was so well prepared for a better.

I find myself here situated exactly to my mind. Weston is one of the prettiest villages in England, and the walks about it at all seasons of the year delightful. I know that you will rejoice with me in the change that we have made, and for which I am altogether indebted to Lady Hesketh. It is a change as great as (to compare metropolitan things with rural) from St. Giles's to Grosvenor Square. Our house is in all respects commodious, and in some degree elegant; and I cannot give you a better idea of that which we have left, than by telling you the present candidates for it are a publican and a shoemaker.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 11, 1786.

SHENSTONE, my dearest cousin, in his commentary on the vulgar adage which says, Second thoughts are best, observes that the *third* thought generally resolves itself into the *first*. Thus it has happened to me. My first thought was to effect a transposition of the old glasses into the new frame; my second, that perhaps both the old glasses and the new frame might be broken in the experiment; and my third, nevertheless, to make the trial. Accordingly I walked down to Olney this day, referred the matter to the watchmaker's consideration, and he has succeeded in the attempt to a wonder. I am at this moment peering through the same medium

as usual, but with the advantage of a more ornamental mounting. I conjecture, by the way, from a passage in your note that accompanied the parcel, that I am indebted not *only* to you for this new accession to my elegant accommodations, but to some kind Incognito likewise; I beg that you will present my thanks accordingly. The clerk of the parish has made me a new pair of straps to my buckles; and the gingerbread, by its genial warmth, has delivered me since dinner from a distension of stomach that was immoderately troublesome, so that I am the better for you, my dear, from head to foot. Long time I in vain endeavoured to make myself master of the lamp, and was obliged at last to call in William to my assistance. Now there are certain things which great geniuses miss, and which men born without any understanding at all hit immediately. In justification of the truth of this remark, William, who is a lump of dough, who never can be more dead than he is till he has been buried a month, explained it to *me* in a moment; accordingly we have used it twice, to my great satisfaction.

I sent Fuseli a hare by the coach that went up this morning, and certainly no man could better deserve it, though it was one of the largest that ever was seen. I could not resist the impulse that I felt to acknowledge my obligations to his critical exertions; and yet shall be sorry that I complied with it, if in consequence of my civility he should become at all less rigorous in his demands, or less severe in his animadversions. I am on the point of finishing the correction of the ninth book, which I have now adjusted to two sheets filled with his strictures. He observes at the close of them,

that to execute a translation of this book in particular, with felicity, appears to him a prodigious task. He considers it, and I think justly, as one of the most consummate efforts of genius handed down to us from antiquity, and calls upon me for my utmost exertions. I have not failed to make them, with what success will be seen hereafter; but of this I am sure, that I have much improved it. The good-natured Padre of the Hall has offered me, in Mrs. Throckmorton's absence, his transcribing assistance, of which I shall avail myself, and deliver over to him the book in question in a day or two.

Mr. Chester paid me a morning visit about the middle of last week. He was, though a man naturally reserved, chatty and good humoured on the occasion, and when he took leave begged that I would not put myself to inconvenience for the sake of returning his visit with a punctilious alacrity in this wet and dirty season:—an allowance for which I was obliged to him, for since we now live five miles asunder, and I never ride, it does not at present occur to me by what means I could possibly get at him.

Our old house is not yet tenanted, but there are candidates for it. They are two who would divide the building between them—a shoemaker, and the alemonger at the Horse and Groom. The carpenter in the mean time has assured Mr. Smith, the landlord, that unless it be well propped, and speedily, it will infallibly fall. Thank you, my dear, for saving our poor noddles from such imminent danger.

I learned to-day, at the Bull, that the liquors which the General has sent me I may expect to see here to-

morrow; there are four hampers of sherry, and one of brandy and rum. The looking-glass which you destined to the study,—that, I mean, which came out of your chamber at the vicarage,—we have ventured to put up in the parlour. It is quite large enough, and makes a very smart appearance. The other, which you may remember to have seen in my chamber at Olney, we have transferred to Nibbs, who, being paid for a new frame, is to furnish us with a new glass for it.

What course have you taken with our friend Arnott? Has Lord Cowper discovered any intentions to perform the part of a Mecænas toward me, or did he leave England forgetful that there was so important a character in it as myself? His little boy, I hope, has recovered. It would grieve me if the family should lose so much generosity as seems to be included in that small bosom.

The cloud that I mentioned to you, my cousin, has passed away, or perhaps the skirts of it may still hang over me. I feel myself, however, tolerably brisk, and tell you so because I know you will be glad to hear it. The grinners at John Gilpin little dream what the author sometimes suffers.—How I hated myself yesterday for having ever wrote it!

May God bless thee, my dear! adieu.

Ever yours,

W. C.

Soon after this reaches you, we hope that you will receive a turkey. It was Mrs. Throckmorton's legacy to us when she went. It never had the honour to be

crammed, for she crams none, but perhaps may not be the worse in flavour on that account. She fed it daily with her own hand.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 16, 1786.

THE death of one whom I valued as I did Mr. Unwin, is a subject on which I could say much, and with much feeling. But habituated as my mind has been these many years to melancholy themes, I am glad to excuse myself the contemplation of them as much as possible. I will only observe, that the death of so young a man, whom I so lately saw in good health, and whose life was so desirable on every account, has something in it peculiarly distressing. I cannot think of the widow and the children that he has left, without an heart-ache that I remember not to have felt before. We may well say, that the ways of God are mysterious: in truth they are so, and to a degree that only such events can give us any conception of. Mrs. Unwin begs me to give her love to you, with thanks for your kind letter. Hers has been so much a life of affliction, that whatever occurs to her in that shape has not, at least, the terrors of novelty to embitter it. She is supported under this, as she has been under a thousand others, with a submission of which I never saw her deprived for a moment.

We have not been visited by a single neighbour since we came to Weston. For this however I can account easily, and without seeing the least occasion

to be either grieved or offended. And to say the truth, in my present state of mind, and with my present occupation in hand, I cannot be much concerned for it. I am often oppressed with melancholy to a degree that would make company very unwelcome, and when I am not so, still find myself engaged in a work that calls for all my time and my closest application. I do not know Mr. John Higgins even by sight, and if I have at any time passed him without showing him the civility due to so respectable a neighbour, it has been owing to no other cause. But he should recollect that it does not rest with me to commence an acquaintance. The resident inhabitants of a place must always make the first advances to a new comer, or they make a visiting intercourse impossible. It can with no propriety originate from me, and I dare say he is well aware of it.

Once, since we left Olney, I had occasion to call at our old dwelling; and never did I see so forlorn and woeful a spectacle. Deserted of its inhabitants, it seemed as if it could never be dwelt in for ever. The coldness of it, the dreariness, and the dirt, made me think it no unapt resemblance of a soul that God has forsaken. While he dwelt in it, and manifested himself there, he could create his own accommodations, and give it occasionally the appearance of a palace; but the moment he withdraws, and takes with him all the furniture and embellishment of his graces, it becomes what it was before he entered it—the habitation of vermin, and the image of desolation. Sometimes I envy the living, but not much, or not long; for while they live, as we call it, they too are liable to desertion.

But the dead who have died in the Lord, I envy always; for they, I take it for granted, can be no more forsaken.

This Babylon, however, that we have left behind us, ruinous as it is, the ceilings cracked and the walls crumbling, still finds some who covet it. A shoemaker and an alemonger have proposed themselves as joint candidates to succeed us. Some small difference between them and the landlord, on the subject of rent, has hitherto kept them out; but at last they will probably agree. In the mean time Mr. Raban prophesies its fall, and tells them that they will occupy it at the hazard of their lives, unless it be well propped before they enter it. We have not, therefore, left it much too soon; and this we knew before we migrated, though the same prophet would never speak out, so long as only our heads were in danger.

I wish you well through your laborious task of transcribing. I hope the good lady's meditations are such as amuse you rather more, while you copy them, than meditations in general would;—which, for the most part, have appeared to me the most laboured, insipid, and unnatural of all productions.

Adieu, my dear friend. Thanks for very fine oysters, and an excellent cocoa-nut, received yesterday. Our love attends you both.

Ever yours,

W. C.

P. S. Nat. Gee, with a long face, asks me if I hear any news of his dividend.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, Dec. 21, 1786.

YOUR welcome letter, my beloved cousin, which ought by the date to have arrived on Sunday, being by some untoward accident delayed, came not till yesterday. It came however, and has relieved me from a thousand distressing apprehensions on your account.

The dew of your intelligence has refreshed my poetical laurels. A little praise now and then is very good for your hard-working poet, who is apt to grow languid, and perhaps careless without it. Praise I find affects us as money does. The more a man gets of it, with the more vigilance he watches over and preserves it. Such at least is its effect on me, and you may assure yourself that I will never lose a mite of it for want of care.

I have already invited the good Padre in general terms, and he shall positively dine here next week, whether he will or not. I do not at all suspect that his kindness to Protestants has any thing insidious in it, any more than I suspect that he transcribes Homer for me with a view for my conversion. He would find me a tough piece of business I can tell him; for when I had no religion at all, I had yet a terrible dread of the Pope. How much more now!

I should have sent you a longer letter, but was obliged to devote my last evening to the melancholy employment of composing a Latin inscription for the tomb-stone of poor William, two copies of which I wrote out and enclosed, one to Henry Thornton, and one to Mr. Newton. Homer stands by me biting his

thumbs, and swears that if I do not leave off directly, he will choke me with bristly Greek, that shall stick in my throat for ever.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 24, 1786.

You must by no means, my dearest coz, pursue the plan that has suggested itself to you on the supposed loss of your letter. In the first place I choose that my Sundays, like the Sundays of other people, shall be distinguished by something that shall make me look forward to them with agreeable expectation, and for that reason desire that they may always bring me a letter from you. In the next place, if I know when to *expect* a letter, I know likewise when to *enquire after* a letter, if it happens not to come; a circumstance of some importance, considering how excessively careless they are at the Swan, where letters are sometimes overlooked, and do not arrive at their destination, if no inquiry be made, till some days have passed after their arrival at Olney. It has happened frequently to me to receive a letter long after all the rest have been delivered, and the Padre assured me that Mr. Throckmorton has sent notes three several times to Mrs. Marriot, complaining of this neglect. For these reasons, my dear, thou must write still on Saturdays, and as often on other days as thou pleasest.

The screens came safe, and one of them is at this moment interposed between me and the fire, much to the comfort of my peepers. The other of them being

fitted up with a screw that was useless, I have consigned to proper hands, that it may be made as serviceable as its brother. They are very neat, and I account them a great acquisition. Our carpenter assures me that the lameness of the chairs was not owing to any injury received in their journey, but that the maker never properly finished them. They were not high when they came, and in order to reduce them to a level, we have lowered them an inch. Thou knowest, child, that the short foot could not be lengthened, for which reason we shortened the long ones. The box containing the plate and the brooms reached us yesterday, and nothing had suffered the least damage by the way. Every thing is smart, every thing is elegant, and we admire them all. The short candlesticks are short enough. I am now writing with those upon the table; Mrs. U. is reading opposite, and they suit us both exactly. With the money that you have in hand, you may purchase, my dear, at your most convenient time, a tea-urn; that which we have at present having never been handsome, and being now old and patched. A parson once, as he walked across the parlour, pushed it down with his belly, and it never perfectly recovered itself. We want likewise a tea-waiter, meaning, if you please, such a one as you may remember to have seen at the Hall, a wooden one. To which you may add, from the same fund, three or four yards of yard-wide muslin, wherewithal to make neckcloths for my worship. If after all these disbursements any thing should be left in the bottom of the purse, we shall be obliged to you if you will expend it in the purchase of silk pocket-handkerchiefs. There,

my precious—I think I have charged thee with commissions in plenty.

You neither must nor shall deny us the pleasure of sending to you such small matters as we do. As to the partridges, you may recollect possibly, when I remind you of it, that I never eat them; they refuse to pass my stomach; and Mrs. Unwin rejoiced in receiving them only because she could pack them away to you—therefore never lay us under any embargoes of this kind, for I tell you beforehand, that we are both incorrigible. My beloved cousin, the first thing I open my eyes upon in a morning, is it not the bed in which you have laid me? Did you not, in our old dismal parlour at Olney, give me the tea on which I breakfast?—the chocolate that I drink at noon, and the table at which I dine?—the every thing, in short, that I possess in the shape of convenience, is it not all from you? and is it possible, think you, that we should either of us overlook an opportunity of making such a tiny acknowledgement of your kindness? Assure yourself that never, while my name is Giles Gingerbread, will I dishonour my glorious ancestry, and my illustrious appellation, by so unworthy a conduct. I love you at my heart, and so does Mrs. U., and we must say thank you, and send you a peppercorn when we can. So thank you, my dear, for the brawn and the chine, and for all the good things that you announce, and at present I will, for your sake, say no more of thanksgiving.

I have answered the Welshman's letter, and have a hope that I shall hear no more of him. He desired my advice, whether to publish or not. In answer, I

congratulated him on the possession of a poetical talent, with which he might always amuse himself when fatigued with the weightier matters of the law. As to publication, I recommended it to him by all means, as the principal incentive to exertion. And with regard to his probability of success, I told him that, as he had, I understood, already made the experiment by appearing in print, he could judge how that matter stood, better than I or any man could do it for him. What could I say, my dear? I was really unwilling to mortify a brother bard, and yet could not avoid it but at the expense of common honesty.

The Padre is to dine with us on Thursday next. I am highly pleased with him, and intend to make all possible advances to a nearer acquaintance. Why he is so silent in company I know not. Perhaps he is reserved, like some other people: or perhaps he holds it unsuitable to his function to be forward in mixed conversation. Certain it is, that he has enough to say when he and I are together. He has transcribed the ninth book for me, and is now transcribing the twelfth, which Mrs. Throckmorton left unfinished. Poor Teedon has dined with us once, and it did me good to stuff him.

We have heard from the poor widow, after whom you so kindly enquire. She answered a letter of Mrs. Unwin's about a week since. Her answer was affectionate, tender, and melancholy to a great degree, but not without expressions of hope and confidence in God. We understand that she has suffered much in her health, as well as in her mind. It could not be otherwise, for she was attached to her husband in the extreme. We

nave learned by a sidewind, since I mentioned her last, that Billy left every thing, or almost every thing, to the children. But she has at present one hundred pounds a year, and will have another hundred hereafter, if she outlives Mrs. U., being jointured in her estate. In the mean time, her sister lives with her, who has, I believe, determined never to marry, from which circumstance she must doubtless derive advantage. She spent some time at Clapham, after her return from Winchester, is now with Mr. John Unwin at Croydon, and goes soon to her gloomy mansion, as she calls it, in Essex. We asked her hither, in hope that a little time spent at Weston might be of use to her, but her affairs would not suffer her to come. She is greatly to be pitied; and whether she will ever recover the stroke is, I think, very uncertain.

I had some time since a very clever letter from Henry C. which I answered as well as I could, but not in kind. I seem to myself immoderately stupid on epistolary occasions, and especially when I wish to shine. Such I seem now, and such to have been ever since I began. So much the worse for you. Pray, my dear, send me a bit of Indian glue, and an almanack.

It gives me true pleasure to learn that the General at least says he is better, but it would give me much more to hear others say the same. Thank your sister for her instructions concerning the lamp, which shall be exactly followed.

I am, my dearest,
Your most Gingerbread Giles, &c.
WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Jan. 3, 1787.

You wish to hear from me at any calm interval of epic frenzy. An interval presents itself, but whether calm or not, is perhaps doubtful. Is it possible for a man to be calm, who for three weeks past has been perpetually occupied in slaughter,—letting out one man's bowels, smiting another through the gullet, transfixing the liver of another, and lodging an arrow in the buttock of a fourth? Read the thirteenth book of the Iliad, and you will find such amusing incidents as these the subject of it, the sole subject. In order to interest myself in it, and to catch the spirit of it, I had need discard all humanity. It is woeful work; and were the best poet in the world to give us at this day such a list of killed and wounded, he would not escape universal censure, to the praise of a more enlightened age be it spoken. I have waded through much blood, and through much more I must wade before I shall have finished. I determine in the mean time to account it all very sublime, and for two reasons,—First, because all the learned think so; and secondly, because I am to translate it. But were I an indifferent by-stander, perhaps I should venture to wish that Homer had applied his wonderful powers to a less disgusting subject. He has in the Odyssey, and I long to get at it.

I have not the good fortune to meet with any of these fine things, that you say are printed in my praise. But I learn from certain advertisements in the Morning Herald, that I make a conspicuous figure in the

entertainments of Freemasons' Hall. I learn also that my volumes are out of print, and that a third edition is soon to be published. But if I am not gratified with the sight of odes composed to my honour and glory, I have at least been tickled with some *douceurs* of a very flattering nature by the post. A lady unknown addresses the best of men;—an unknown gentleman has read my inimitable poems, and invites me to his seat in Hampshire;—another incognito gives me hopes of a memorial in his garden, and a Welsh attorney sends me his verses to revise, and obliging asks,

> "Say, shall my little bark attendant sail,
> Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale?"

If you find me a little vain hereafter, my friend, you must excuse it, in consideration of these powerful incentives, especially the latter; for surely the poet who can charm an attorney, especially a Welsh one, must be at least an Orpheus, if not something greater.

Mrs. Unwin is as much delighted as myself with our present situation. But it is a sort of April-weather life that we lead in this world. A little sunshine is generally the prelude to a storm. Hardly had we begun to enjoy the change, when the death of her son cast a gloom upon every thing. He was a most exemplary man; of your order; learned, polite, and amiable. The father of lovely children, and the husband of a wife (very much like dear Mrs. Bagot) who adored him.

Adieu, my friend! Your affectionate

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 8, 1787.

I HAVE had a little nervous fever lately, my dear, that has somewhat abridged my sleep; and though I find myself better to-day than I have been since it seized me, yet I feel my head lightish, and not in the best order for writing. You will find me therefore perhaps not only less alert in my manner than I usually am when my spirits are good, but rather shorter. I will however proceed to scribble till I find that it fatigues me, and then will do as I know you would bid me do were you here, shut up my desk, and take a walk.

The good General tells me that in the eight first books which I have sent him, he still finds alterations and amendments necessary, of which I myself am equally persuaded; and he asks my leave to lay them before an intimate friend of his, of whom he gives a character that bespeaks him highly deserving such a trust. To this I have no objection, desiring only to make the translation as perfect as I can make it. If God grant me life and health, I would spare no labour to secure that point. The General's letter is extremely kind, and both for matter and manner like all the rest of his dealings with his cousin the poet.

I had a letter also yesterday from Mr. Smith, member for Nottingham. Though we never saw each other, he writes to me in the most friendly terms, and interests himself much in my Homer, and in the success of my subscription. Speaking on this latter subject, he says that my poems are read by hundreds

who know nothing of my proposals, and makes no doubt that they would subscribe if they did. I have myself always thought them imperfectly, or rather insufficiently announced.

I could pity the poor woman who has been weak enough to claim my song. Such pilferings are sure to be detected. I wrote it, I know not how long, but I suppose four years ago. The Rose in question was a Rose given to Lady Austen by Mrs. Unwin, and the incident that suggested the subject occurred in the room in which you slept at the vicarage, which Lady Austen made her dining-room. Some time since, Mr. Bull going to London, I gave him a copy of it, which he undertook to convey to Nichols, the printer of the Gentleman's Magazine. He showed it to a Mrs. C———, who begged to copy it, and promised to send it to the printer's by her servant. Three or four months afterwards, and when I had concluded it was lost, I saw it in the Gentleman's Magazine, with my signature, W. C. Poor simpleton! She will find now perhaps that the Rose had a thorn, and that she has pricked her fingers with it. Adieu! my beloved cousin.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 18, 1787.

I HAVE been so much indisposed with the fever that I told you had seized me, my nights during the whole week may be said to have been almost sleepless. The

consequence has been, that except the translation of about thirty lines at the conclusion of the thirteenth book, I have been forced to abandon Homer entirely. This was a sensible mortification to me, as you may suppose, and felt the more because, my spirits of course failing with my strength, I seemed to have peculiar need of my old amusement. It seemed hard therefore to be forced to resign it just when I wanted it most. But Homer's battles cannot be fought by a man who does not sleep well, and who has not some little degree of animation in the day time. Last night, however, quite contrary to my expectations, the fever left me entirely, and I slept quietly, soundly, and long. If it please God that it return not, I shall soon find myself in a condition to proceed. I walk constantly, that is to say, Mrs. Unwin and I together; for at these times I keep her continually employed, and never suffer her to be absent from me many minutes. She gives me all her time, and all her attention, and forgets that there is another object in the world.

Mrs. Carter thinks on the subject of dreams as every body else does, that is to say, according to her own experience. She has had no extraordinary ones, and therefore accounts them only the ordinary operations of the fancy. Mine are of a texture that will not suffer me to ascribe them to so inadequate a cause, or to any cause but the operation of an exterior agency. I have a mind, my dear, (and to you I will venture to boast of it) as free from superstition as any man living, neither do I give heed to dreams in

general as predictive, though particular dreams I believe to be so. Some very sensible persons, and I suppose Mrs. Carter among them, will acknowledge that in old times God spoke by dreams, but affirm with much boldness that he has since ceased to do so. If you ask them why? they answer, because he has now revealed his will in the Scripture, and there is no longer any need that he should instruct or admonish us by dreams. I grant that with respect to doctrines and precepts he has left us in want of nothing; but has he thereby precluded himself in any of the operations of his Providence? Surely not. It is perfectly a different consideration; and the same need that there ever was of his interference in this way, there is still, and ever must be, while man continues blind and fallible, and a creature beset with dangers which he can neither foresee nor obviate. His operations however of this kind are, I allow, very rare; and as to the generality of dreams, they are made of such stuff, and are in themselves so insignificant, that though I believe them all to be the manufacture of others, not our own, I account it not a farthing-matter who manufactures them. So much for dreams!

My fever is not yet gone, but sometimes seems to leave me. It is altogether of the nervous kind, and attended, now and then, with much dejection.

A young gentleman called here yesterday, who came six miles out of his way to see me. He was on a journey to London from Glasgow, having just left the university there. He came I suppose partly to satisfy his own curiosity, but chiefly, as it seemed, to

bring me the thanks of some of the Scotch professors for my two volumes. His name is Rose, an Englishman. Your spirits being good, you will derive more pleasure from this incident than I can at present, therefore I send it.

Adieu, very affectionately,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

DEAR SIR, Weston, July 24, 1787.

THIS is the first time I have written these six months, and nothing but the constraint of obligation could induce me to write now. I cannot be so wanting to myself as not to endeavour at least to thank you both for the visits with which you have favoured me, and the poems that you sent me; in my present state of mind I taste nothing, nevertheless I read, partly from habit, and partly because it is the only thing that I am capable of.

I have therefore read Burns's poems, and have read them twice; and though they be written in a language that is new to me, and many of them on subjects much inferior to the author's ability, I think them on the whole a very extraordinary production. He is I believe the only poet these kingdoms have produced in the lower rank of life since Shakespeare, (I should rather say since Prior,) who need not be indebted for any part of his praise to a charitable consideration of his origin, and the disadvantages under which he has laboured. It will be pity if he should not hereafter

Samuel Rose

divest himself of barbarism, and content himself with writing pure English, in which he appears perfectly qualified to excel. He who can command admiration, dishonours himself if he aims no higher than to raise a laugh.

I am, dear sir, with my best wishes for your prosperity, and with Mrs. Unwin's respects,

Your obliged and affectionate humble servant,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

DEAR SIR, Weston, Aug. 27, 1787.

I HAVE not yet taken up the pen again, except to write to you. The little taste that I have had of your company, and your kindness in finding me out, make me wish that we were nearer neighbours, and that there were not so great a disparity in our years; that is to say, not that you were older, but that I were younger. Could we have met in early life, I flatter myself that we might have been more intimate than now we are likely to be. But you shall not find me slow to cultivate such a measure of your regard, as your friends of your own age can spare me. When your route shall lie through this country, I shall hope that the same kindness which has prompted you twice to call on me, will prompt you again, and I shall be happy if, on a future occasion, I may be able to give you a more cheerful reception than can be expected from an invalid. My health and spirits are considerably improved, and I once more associate with my

neighbours. My head, however, has been the worst part of me, and still continues so,—is subject to giddiness and pain, maladies very unfavourable to poetical employment; but a preparation of the bark, which I take regularly, has so far been of service to me in those respects, as to encourage in me a hope that by perseverance in the use of it, I may possibly find myself qualified to resume the translation of Homer.

When I cannot walk, I read, and read perhaps more than is good for me. But I cannot be idle. The only mercy that I show myself in this respect is, that I read nothing that requires much closeness of application. I lately finished the perusal of a book, which in former years I have more than once attacked, but never till now conquered; some other book always interfered before I could finish it. The work I mean is Barclay's Argenis; and if ever you allow yourself to read for mere amusement, I can recommend it to you, (provided you have not already perused it,) as the most amusing romance that ever was written. It is the only one indeed of an old date that I ever had the patience to go through with. It is interesting in a high degree; richer in incident than can be imagined, full of surprises, which the reader never forestalls, and yet free from all entanglement and confusion. The style too appears to me to be such as would not dishonour Tacitus himself.

Poor Burns loses much of his deserved praise in this country, through our ignorance of his language. I despair of meeting with any Englishman who will take the pains that I have taken to understand him.

His candle is bright, but shut up in a dark lantern. I lent him to a very sensible neighbour of mine: but his uncouth dialect spoiled all; and before he had half read him through, he was quite *ram-feezled.*

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, Aug. 30, 1787.

THOUGH it costs me something to write, it would cost me more to be silent. My intercourse with my neighbours being renewed, I can no longer seem to forget how many reasons there are, why you especially should not be neglected,—no neighbour indeed, but the kindest of my friends, and ere long, I hope, an inmate.

My health and spirits seem to be mending daily: to what end I know not, neither will conjecture, but endeavour, as far as I can, to be content that they do so. I use exercise, and take the air in the park and wilderness: I read much, but as yet write not. Our friends at the Hall make themselves more and more amiable in our account, by treating us rather as old friends, than as friends newly acquired. There are few days in which we do not meet, and I am now almost as much at home in their house as in our own. Mr. Throckmorton, having long since put me in possession of all his ground, has now given me possession of his library: an acquisition of great value to me, who never have been able to live without books since I first knew my letters, and who have no books of my own. By his means I have been so well supplied, that

I have not yet even looked at the Lounger, for which however I do not forget that I am obliged to you. *His* turn comes next, and I shall probably begin him to-morrow.

Mr. George Throckmorton is at the Hall. I thought I had known these brothers long enough to have found out all their talents and accomplishments; but I was mistaken. The day before yesterday, after having walked with us, they *carried* us up to the library, (a more accurate writer would have said, *conducted* us,) and then they showed me the contents of an immense port-folio, the work of their own hands. It was furnished with drawings of the architectural kind, executed in a most masterly manner, and among others, contained outside and inside views of the Pantheon,—I mean the Roman one. They were all, I believe, made at Rome. Some men may be estimated at a first interview, but the Throckmortons must be seen often, and known long, before one can understand all their value.

They often enquire after you, and ask me whether you visit Weston this autumn. I answer, yes; and I charge you, my dearest cousin, to authenticate my information. Write to me, and tell us when we may expect to see you. We were disappointed that we had no letter from you this morning. You will find me coated and buttoned according to your recommendation.

I write but little, because writing is become new to me; but I shall come on by degrees. Mrs. Unwin begs to be affectionately remembered to you. She is

in tolerable health, which is the chief comfort here that I have to boast of.

Yours, my dearest cousin, as ever,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COZ, The Lodge, Sept. 4, 1787.

COME when thou canst come, secure of being always welcome! All that is here is thine, together with the hearts of those who dwell here. I am only sorry that your journey hither is necessarily postponed beyond the time when I did hope to have seen you; sorry too that my uncle's infirmities are the occasion of it. But years *will* have their course, and their effect; they are happiest, so far as this life is concerned, who like him escape those effects the longest, and who do not grow old before their time. Trouble and anguish do that for some, which only longevity does for others. A few months since I was older than your father is now, and though I have lately recovered, as Falstaff says, *some smatch of my youth*, I have but little confidence, in truth none, in so flattering a change, but expect, *when I least expect it*, to wither again. The past is a pledge for the future.

Mr. G. is here, Mrs. Throckmorton's uncle. He is lately arrived from Italy, where he has resided several years, and is so much the gentleman, that it is impossible to be more so: sensible, polite, obliging; slender in his figure, and in manners most engaging,—every way worthy to be related to the Throckmortons.

I have read Savary's Travels into Egypt; Memoirs

du Baron de Tott; Fenn's Original Letters; the Letters of Frederic of Bohemia; and am now reading Memoirs d'Henri de Lorraine, Duc de Guise. I have also read Barclay's Argenis, a Latin romance, and the best romance that ever was written. All these, together with Madan's Letters to Priestley, and several pamphlets, within these two months. So I am a great reader.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Sept. 8, 1787.

I CONTINUE to write, as you perceive, my dearest cousin, though, in compassion for my pate, you advised me for the present to abstain:—in reality I have no need, at least I believe not, of any such caution. Those jarrings that made my scull feel like a broken egg-shell, and those twirls that I spoke of, have been removed by an infusion of the bark, which I have of late constantly applied to. I was blooded indeed, but to no purpose; for the whole complaint was owing to relaxation. But the apothecary recommended phlebotomy, in order to ascertain that matter; wisely suggesting that if I found no relief from bleeding, it would be a sufficient proof that weakness must necessarily be the cause. It is well when the head is chargeable with no weakness but what may be cured by an astringent.

Thanks to your choice, I wear the most elegant buttons in all this country: they have been much admired at the Hall. When my waistcoat is made I

shall be quite accomplished. You have made us both happy by giving us a nearer prospect of your arrival. But Mrs. Unwin says you must not fix an early day for your departure, nor talk of staying only two or three weeks, because it will be a thorn that she shall lean upon all the time that you are here; and so say I. It is a comfort to be informed when a visitor will go whom we wish to be rid of, but the reverse of a comfort, my cousin, when you are in the question.

Your last letter to Mrs. U. never came to hand; and as to the bed, it is so long since you supposed it sent that I fear it is altogether lost. You never mentioned it in any of your letters, therefore we did not look for it; its non-arrival would otherwise have been noticed. It is possible, however, that either the upholsterer, or the book-keeper at the inn, or the waggoner, may be able to give us some tidings of it. Woe be to them, careless knaves! if they have lost it among them!

The Throcks, as you observe, are Foxites; but their moderation in party matters is such, that in all the interviews we have had this summer, the string of politics has never been touched. Upon recollection, I must except a single instance, in which Peter Pindar, whose last piece Mr. Throckmorton lent me, furnished the occasion. But even then, though I took the opportunity of speaking my mind of that licentious lampooner of dignities very freely, we had no dispute. It was agreed on all hands to be great pity, considering the ill effect of such political ribaldry on the minds of the multitude, that the court has not stopped his

mouth with a bribe;—nobody doubted that he would open it wide enough for the reception of a large one. How contemptible is wit so miserably misemployed!

I admire as much as you the spirit of our young minister. The Emperor and Pitt seem to be the two greatest names of the present age. They are both at present in circumstances that give them a noble opportunity to display their address, and we shall soon see how they will acquit themselves. If they can manage their respective difficulties without bloodshed, they will each deserve a statue. I entirely agree with you that the ardour of youth under the control of wisdom, are the two essentials to make a good minister. Were the old Duke of Newcastle now at the helm, the French party in Holland would carry all before them, and the French court would pull us by the nose. Sir Thomas, therefore, was right in his opinion, as indeed he generally was,—and in political matters, I believe, always.

Our neighbours rejoice that you are coming, and desire me to tell you so. Mrs. Throckmorton walked with us yesterday morning to gather mushrooms.

We send you two brace of partridges;—one brace from them, and one brace a present from Mr. John Higgins.

With Mrs. U.'s affectionate respects,

Yours, my dear, ever,

WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, Sept. 15, 1787.

On Monday last I was invited to meet your friend Miss Jekyll at the Hall, and there we found her. Her good nature, her humorous manner, and her good sense, are charming; insomuch that even I, who was never much addicted to speech-making, and who at present find myself particularly indisposed to it, could not help saying at parting, I am glad that I have seen you, and sorry that I have seen so little of you. We were sometimes many in company: on Thursday we were fifteen, but we had not altogether so much vivacity and cleverness as Miss Jekyll, whose talent at mirth-making has this rare property to recommend it, that nobody suffers by it.

I am making a gravel walk for winter use, under a warm hedge in the orchard. It shall be furnished with a low seat for your accommodation, and if you do but like it I shall be satisfied. In wet weather, or rather after wet weather, when the street is dirty, it will suit you well, for lying on an easy declivity through its whole length, it must of course be immediately dry.

You are very much wished for by our friends at the Hall:—how much by me I will not tell you till the second week in October.

Yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Sept. 20, 1787.

FOR the more effectual abatement of your furious ire, my dearest coz, on the subject of these same partridges, it is expedient you should be told that we sent you only a *part* of the last present of that sort which we received from the Hall. Know also that when we found ourselves disposed to stew or to pot, we have an abundant supply of pigeons for those purposes from our neighbour's dove-cote, Mrs. Throck having given us the use of it at discretion. I know not by what coach they sent the basket which you never received, but I suppose by the Northampton coach. That it *was* sent is certain, and when I answer a letter which I expect to receive from our fair neighbour soon, (for she has promised to write to us,) I will thank her on your behalf.

Rogers the Great has himself at last been spoken with about the bedstead. He expressed much concern for the loss of it, but at the same time was pretty positive that no such *meûble* had ever been conveyed to his warehouse in St. John Street. He thinks it must have been carried to some other inn, but promises to make enquiry when he goes next to London.

Miss J * * informed me that a conjugal connexion between herself and the Rev. Mr. * * * * having been proposed by * * * * * * * * *, she held it adviseable to mention the matter to me, that if I had any influence with that gentleman, I might employ it for the promotion of so desirable a purpose. I replied that she was the most fortunate of women in having directed

her application in that instance to me, for that I had stronger interest with him than any body. I learned in the course of our conversation on the subject that she was principally enamoured of his *house*, for himself she had never seen. He does not visit at the Hall, and how it has happened that he does not I have never been able to learn, for of all the neighbouring clergy, he is in that respect almost a singular exception: it is an exception, however, that renders my interposition on the occasion the more expedient; and certain it is that for whatsoever name she should exchange her own, if the consequence might be her approximation to us, we should rejoice in it. He sent us yesterday a present of the finest perch that I have seen these seven years.

I read with much pleasure, my dear cousin, the account that you give of my uncle, his snug and calm way of living, the neatness of his little person, and the cheerfulness of his spirit. How happy is he at so advanced an age, to have those with him whose chief delight is to entertain him, and to be susceptible as he is of being amused. Longevity, that in general either deprives a man of his friends, or if not of the power of enjoying their conversation, deals with *him* more gently, and still indulges him in the possession of those privileges which alone make life desirable. May he long continue to possess them! I acquiesce entirely in the justness of your reasoning on this subject, and must need confess that were I your father, I should with great reluctance resign you to the demands of any cousin in the world. I shall be happy to see you,

mouth with a bribe;—nobody doubted that he would open it wide enough for the reception of a large one. How contemptible is wit so miserably misemployed!

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Yours,

W. C.

under heaven has there never been a throne so execrably tyrannical as theirs. The heads of the innocent that have been cut off to gratify the humour or caprice of their tyrants, could they be all collected and discharged against the walls of their city, would not leave one stone on another.

O that you were here this beautiful day! It is too fine by half to be spent in London. I have a perpetual din in my head, and, though I am not deaf, hear nothing aright, neither my own voice, nor that of others. I am under a tub, from which tub accept my best love.

Yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, Oct. 5, 1787.

MY uncle's commendation of my hand-writing was the more agreeable to me as I have seldom received any on that subject. I write generally in the helter-skelter way, concerning myself about nothing more than to be legible. I am sorry for his deafness, which I hope however, by this time, the doctor and the doctor's engine have removed. It is well if he is cheerful under that malady, which oppresses the spirits of most men more than any other disorder that is not accompanied with pain. We have but few senses, and can spare none of them without much inconvenience. But I know that when my uncle's spirits are good, they are proof against all oppression.

Mrs. Throck has not written to me, and now will

not. Mr. Gregson had a letter from one of them to-day, in which they send compliments to us, and tell us they will be at home on Tuesday. How should she find time to write to me, who has been visiting her brother, one of the gayest young men in the world, who is building a great house, and has one of the finest pieces of water in England, with thirty boats on it? I am sorry to hear that his youth, and his riches together, bid fair to ruin him,—that he is a prey to his neighbours, plays deep, and consequently cannot be rich long. Excessive good-nature is a quality attended with so much danger to a young man, that, amiable as it is, one cannot help pitying the man that owns it.

Mrs. Chester paid her first visit here last Saturday, a prelude, no doubt, to the visit that she intends to you. I was angry with her for her omission of a civility to which you are so highly entitled; but now that she discovers symptoms of repentance, feel myself inclined to pardon her. She is one of those women, indeed, to whom one pardons every thing the moment they appear,—not handsome, but showing a gentleness in her countenance, voice, and manner, that speaks irresistibly in her favour.

Your newspaper, for which I thank you, my cousin, pleases me more than any that I have seen lately. The pertness of the Herald is my detestation, yet I always read it; and why? because it is a newspaper, and should therefore doubtless read it were it ten times more disgusting than it is. Fielding was the only man who ever attempted to be witty with success in a newspaper, and even he could not support it long. But he led the way in his Covent Garden Journal,

and a thousand blockheads have followed him. I am not pleased, however, with that furious attack upon the poor Abbé Mann. The zealous Protestant who makes it, discovers too much of that spirit which he charges upon the Papists. The poor Abbé's narrative was in a manner extorted from him; and when I read it, instead of finding it insidious and hostile to the interests of the Church of England, I was foolish enough to think it discreet, modest, temperate. The gentleman, therefore, has either more zeal, or a better nose at a plot, than I have.

The bedstead, my dear, suffered nothing by the long delay and the bad lodging that it met with: it could not have looked better than it does had it arrived at the time intended. It lost a screw indeed; but our neighbour the tailor happening to have an odd one exactly of the right size, supplied the deficiency. It will have its furniture to-morrow.

Poor Teedon, whom I dare say you remember, has never missed calling here once, and generally twice, a week since January last. The poor man has gratitude if he has not wit, and in the possession of that one good quality has a sufficient recommendation. I blame myself often for finding him tiresome, but cannot help it. My only comfort is that I should be more weary of thousands who have all the cleverness that has been denied to Teedon.

I have been reading Hanway's Travels, and of course the history of Nadir Shah, alias Kouli Khan—a hero! my dear,—and I am old enough to remember the time when he was accounted one. He built up pyramids of human heads, and had consequently many

admirers. But he has found few, I imagine, in the world to which he is gone to give an account of his building. I have now just entered upon Baker's Chronicle, having never seen it in my life till I found it in the Hall library. It is a book at which you and I should have laughed immoderately, some years ago. It is equally wise and foolish, which makes the most ridiculous mixture in the world.

With Mrs. U.'s affectionate respects, my dearest cousin,

I am ever yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

DEAR SIR, Weston, Oct. 19, 1787.

A SUMMONS from Johnson, which I received yesterday, calls my attention once more to the business of translation. Before I begin I am willing to catch though but a short opportunity to acknowledge your last favour. The necessity of applying myself with all diligence to a long work that has been but too long interrupted, will make my opportunities of writing rare in future.

Air and exercise are necessary to all men, but particularly so to the man whose mind labours; and to him who has been all his life accustomed to much of both, they are necessary in the extreme. My time since we parted, has been devoted entirely to the recovery of health and strength for this service, and I am willing to hope with good effect. Ten months have passed since I discontinued my poetical efforts; I do

not expect to find the same readiness as before, till exercise of the neglected faculty, such as it is, shall have restored it to me.

You find yourself, I hope, by this time as comfortably situated in your new abode, as in a new abode one can be. I enter perfectly into all your feelings on occasion of the change. A sensible mind cannot do violence even to a local attachment without much pain. When my father died I was young, too young to have reflected much. He was Rector of Berkhamstead, and there I was born. It had never occurred to me that a parson has no fee-simple in the house and glebe he occupies. There was neither tree, nor gate, nor stile, in all that country, to which I did not feel a relation, and the house itself I preferred to a palace. I was sent for from London to attend him in his last illness, and he died just before I arrived. Then, and not till then, I felt for the first time that I and my native place were disunited for ever. I sighed a long adieu to fields and woods, from which I once thought I should never be parted, and was at no time so sensible of their beauties, as just when I left them all behind me, to return no more.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 20, 1787.

My indisposition could not be of a worse kind. Had I been afflicted with a fever, or confined by a broken bone, neither of these cases would have made it impossible that we should meet. I am truly sorry that

the impediment was insurmountable while it lasted, for such in fact it was. The sight of any face except Mrs. Unwin's, was to me an insupportable grievance; and when it has happened that by *forcing* himself into my hiding-place, some friend has found me out, he has had no great cause to exult in his success, as Mr. Bull can tell you. From this dreadful condition of mind I emerged suddenly; so suddenly, that Mrs. Unwin, having no notice of such a change herself, could give none to any body; and when it obtained, how long it might last, or how far it was to be depended on, was a matter of the greatest uncertainty. It affects me on the recollection with the more concern, because I learn from your last, that I have not only lost an interview with you myself, but have stood in the way of visits that you would have gladly paid to others, and who would have been happy to have seen you. You should have forgotten, (but you are not good at forgetting your friends,) that such a creature as myself existed.

It has happened indeed, and by means that it was not possible for us to prevent, that our chambers have not had beds in them till within this fortnight. Lady Hesketh undertook to furnish them for us, and by a strange blunder of the people at the inn, or of the waggoner, the materials that she sent for the purpose, remained almost a twelvemonth in the warehouse. She ordered them hither without mentioning that she had done it in any of her letters to Mrs. Unwin, who wondered indeed that they did not come, but could not decently take any notice of their non-arrival.

I rejoice that Mrs. Cowper has been so comfortably

supported. She must have severely felt the loss of her son. She has an affectionate heart toward her children, and could not but be sensible of the bitterness of such a cup. But God's presence sweetens every bitter. Desertion is the only evil that a Christian cannot bear.

I have done a deed for which I find some people thank me little. Perhaps I have only burned my fingers, and had better not have meddled. Last Sunday se'nnight I drew up a petition to Lord Dartmouth, in behalf of Mr. Postlethwaite. We signed it, and all the principal inhabitants of Weston followed our example. What we had done was soon known in Olney, and an evening or two ago, Mr. Raban called here, to inform me, (for that seemed to be his errand,) how little the measure that I had taken was relished by some of his neighbours. I vindicated my proceeding on the principles of justice and mercy to a laborious and well-deserving minister, to whom I had the satisfaction to find that none could allege one serious objection, and that all, except one, who objected at all, are persons who in reality ought to have no vote upon such a question. The affair seems still to remain undecided. If his Lordship waits, which I a little suspect, till his steward shall have taken the sense of those with whom he is likely to converse upon the subject, and means to be determined by his report, Mr. Postlethwaite's case is desperate.

I beg that you will remember me affectionately to Mr. Bacon. We rejoice in Mrs. Newton's amended health, and when we can hear that she is restored, shall rejoice still more. The next summer may prove

more propitious to us than the past: if it should, we shall be happy to receive you and yours. Mrs. Unwin unites with me in love to you all three. She is tolerably well, and her writing was prevented by nothing but her expectation that I should soon do it myself.

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH, NEW NORFOLK STREET, GROSVENOR SQUARE, LONDON.

The Lodge, Saturday,
Oct. 27, 1787.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Now that there is something like a time appointed, I feel myself a little more at my ease. Days and weeks slide imperceptibly away; November is just at hand, and the half of it, as you observe, will soon be over. Then, no impediment intervening, we shall meet once more,—a happiness of which I so lately despaired. My uncle, who so kindly spared you before, will I doubt not spare you again. He knows that a little frisk in country air will be serviceable to you, and even to my welfare, which is not a little concerned in the matter, I am persuaded he is not indifferent. For this and for many other reasons I ardently wish that he may enjoy and long enjoy the present measure of health, with which he is favoured. Our wants are included within the compass of two items. *I* want a watch-string, and we *both* are in want of certain things, called candle-ends, but of wax, not *tallow-fats*. Those with which you furnished us at Olney are not quite expended indeed, but are drawing near to their dissolu-

tion. Should I after farther scrutiny discover any other deficiencies, you shall know them.

You need not, my dear, be under any apprehensions lest I should too soon engage again in the translation of Homer. My health and strength of spirits for this service are, I believe, exactly in *statu quo prius*. But Mrs. Unwin having enlarged upon this head, I will therefore say the less. Whether I shall live to finish it, or whether, if I should, I shall live to enjoy any fruit of my labours, are articles in my account of such extreme uncertainty, that I feel them often operate as no small discouragement. But uncertain as these things are, I yet consider the employment *essential* to my present well-being, and pursue it accordingly. But had Pope been subject to the same alarming speculations, had he waking and sleeping dreamt as I do, I am inclined to think he would not have been my predecessor in these labours; for I compliment myself with a persuasion that I have more heroic valour, of the passive kind at least, than he had,—perhaps than any man; it would be strange had I not, after so much exercise.

By some accident or other it comes to pass that I see the Throckmortons daily. Yesterday, soon after I had received your letter, I met them armed with bow and arrows, going to practise at the target in the garden. I consulted them on the subject of the best road from Newport hither, and the prevailing opinion was in favour of the road through Emberton. It is rough, indeed, but not so heavy as the road by Gayhurst. Mrs. Throck, anxious to put the matter past all doubt, cut a caper on the grass-plot, and said she

would go ride to Olney immediately on purpose to examine the road. If her report contains any thing material, you shall hear it.

By *their* means I hear of Mrs. W * * daily. Their account of her yesterday was, that she begins to eat, and is somewhat more recollected. Dr. Kerr, I believe, is *now* pretty confident of her recovery. But it has been a terrible malady.

I rejoice, my dear, that you have such a Cadwallader. Silent and sober is exactly the character of our household; we shall be as harmonious as any thing so noiseless can be.

I thank you for the Prologue. There are, as you say, some good lines in it; and *so* good, that it is pity they have not a better ending. But the distinction between *Praise* and *Applause*, is too fine for an ordinary apprehension.

In a letter that I received yesterday from the General, he tells me that my MSS. are all safe: a piece of intelligence that refreshed me much. For missing some books that I did not remember to have sent, I began to be in no small *quandary*. I expect in a few days the old box brimful of heroics.

Farewell, my dearest coz.! the month that you speak of will be short indeed, unless you can contrive to lengthen it.

Ever yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Nov. 3, 1787.

SUFFER not thyself, my dearest coz., to be seduced from thy purpose. There are those among thy friends and kindred who being covetous of thy company will endeavour to keep thee near them, and the better to effect their machinations, will possess thee, if they can, with many megrims concerning the roads and the season of the year. But heed them not. They only do what I should do myself were I in their predicament, who certainly should not fail, for my own sake, to represent your intended journey as an enterprise rather to be admired than approved—more bold than prudent. The turnpike, as you well know, will facilitate your progress every inch of the way till you come to Sherrington, and from Sherrington hither you will find the way equally safe, though undoubtedly a little rough. Rough it was when you were here, such it is still, but not rougher than then, nor will it be so. The reason is this—that the soil being naturally a rock is very little, or rather not at all affected by the season, for as thou well knowest, no showers will melt a stone. The distance also from Sherrington toll-gate to our door is but four miles and a quarter. The only reason why I do not recommend the back road rather than this, is because it is apt to be heavy; in other respects it deserves the preferance, for it is just as safe as the other, and from the turning at Gayhurst, is shorter than that by a mile and a half. The Throcks travel them both continually, and so do all the chaises and coaches in the

country, and I never heard of an accident to any of them in all the twenty years that I have lived in it. Mr. and Mrs. Throck, understanding that you are a little apprehensive on this subject, begged me yesterday evening to tell you that *they* will send their servant to meet you at Newport, who will direct your *cocher* to all the best and most commodious quarters. As to the season of the year, I grant that it is November. It would be but folly to deny it. But what then?—Does not the sun shine in November? One would imagine that it did not, could not, or would not, were we to listen only to the suggestions of certain persons. But, my dear, the matter is far otherwise; nay it is even just the reverse; for he not only shines, but with such splendour too, that I write at this moment in a room heated by his beams, and with the curtain at my side let down on purpose to abate their fervour. Then let November have its just praise, and let not my cousin fear to find the country pleasant even now. I have said it in verse, and I think it in prose, that as it is at all times preferable to the town, so is it especially preferable in winter, provided I mean that you have gravel to walk upon, of which there is no scarcity at Weston.

Coming home from my walk yesterday I met Mr. Throck., on his return from Gayhurst. I was glad that I had so good an opportunity to inform myself concerning Mrs. W * *. His account of her was in some respects favourable, but upon the whole not flattering. She eats, it is true, and knows those about her; but she almost keeps her bed, is torpid, and inattentive to all that passes, and can hardly be

prevailed with to speak, unless constrained to it. Dr. Kerr professes himself perfectly master of her case, but I have more than once heard some wonder expressed that they have not called in other assistance. The present is an unfortunate period in that family: three or four days since, Mr. W * * had a terrible fall from his horse. He was fox-hunting; and in Yardley Chase, the hounds chose to follow the deer. He rode violently to whip them off, when his horse plunged into a slough, pitched him over his head, and fell upon him. The softness of the ground saved him, but he was much hurt in both shoulders, and is now suffering by a fit of the gout, which the fall has brought upon him. Mr. Throck. and Mrs. Throck.'s brother, who is now at the Hall, happened to see him thrown, and very humanely assisted him to mount again, which without their help he could never have done. The rest of the company were too much fox-hunters to trouble themselves at all about him.

Many thanks, my dear cousin, both on Mrs. Unwin's part and mine for the gown you have purchased for her. She is even now proud of it, and will be prouder still when she shall put it on. I shall be glad of the paper; not that I am in immediate want, but it is good to be provided. I shall put the fourteenth Iliad into Mrs. Throck.'s hands in a day or two; I am at present only employed by blots and obliterations in making it more difficult for her to decipher.

Adieu, my dear. Our best love, and best wishes are always with you.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

I hear of three prints lately published. Two of Crazy Kate, and one of the Lacemaker in "Truth." Mr. Wm. T———n has said that he will send them to me.

I rejoice that we have peace, at least a respite from war. But you do well to suspect the French of a double meaning, or even of a treble one if that be possible. I believe they mean nothing so little, as to be honest.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Nov. 10, 1787.

THE parliament, my dearest cousin, prorogued continually, is a meteor dancing before my eyes, promising me my wish only to disappoint me, and none but the king and his ministers can tell when you and I shall come together. I hope however that the period, though so often postponed, is not far distant, and that once more I shall behold you, and experience your power to make winter gay and sprightly.

I have a kitten, my dear, the drollest of all creatures that ever wore a cat's skin. Her gambols are not to be described, and would be incredible, if they could. In point of size she is likely to be a kitten always, being extremely small of her age, but time I suppose, that spoils every thing, will make her also a cat. You will see her I hope before that melancholy period shall arrive, for no wisdom that she may gain by experience and reflection hereafter, will compensate the loss of her present hilarity. She is dressed in a tortoise-shell suit, and I know that you will delight in her.

Mrs. Throckmorton carries us to-morrow in her chaise to Chicheley. The event however must be suppose to depend on elements, at least on the state of the atmosphere, which is turbulent beyond measure. Yesterday it thundered, last night it lightened, and at three this morning I saw the sky as red as a city in flames could have made it. I have a leech in a bottle that foretells all these prodigies and convulsions of nature: no, not as you will naturally conjecture by articulate utterance of oracular notices, but by a variety of gesticulations, which here I have not room to give an account of. Suffice it to say, that no change of weather surprises him, and that in point of the earliest and most accurate intelligence, he is worth all the barometers in the world. None of them all indeed can make the least pretence to foretell thunder—a species of capacity of which he has given the most unequivocal evidence. I gave but sixpence for him, which is a groat more than the market price, though he is in fact, or rather would be, if leeches were not found in every ditch, an invaluable acquisition.

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Nov. 16, 1787.

I THANK you for the solicitude that you express on the subject of my present studies. The work is undoubtedly long and laborious, but it has an end, and proceeding leisurely, with a due attention to the use of air and exercise, it is possible that I may live to finish it. Assure yourself of one thing, that though to a

by-stander it may seem an occupation surpassing the powers of a constitution never very athletic, and, at present, not a little the worse for wear, I can invent for myself no employment that does not exhaust my spirits more. I will not pretend to account for this, I will only say that it is not the language of predilection for a favourite amusement, but that the fact is really so. I have even found that those plaything-avocations, which one may execute almost without any attention, fatigue me, and wear me away, while such as engage me much, and attach me closely, are rather serviceable to me than otherwise.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Weston Lodge, Nov. 17, 1787.

WE are therefore not to meet before Christmas. There is a combination of King, Lords, and Commons against it, and we must submit. I do it with an ill grace, but in a corner; and nobody—not even yourself, shall know with how much reluctance. In consideration of the necessity there is, that should you come on this side Christmas you must return immediately after the holidays, on account of those three limbs of the legislature coming together again, I am so far well content that your journey hither should be postponed till your continuance here shall be less liable to interruption; and I console myself in the mean time with frequent recollections of that passage in your letter, in which you speak of frequent visits to Weston. This is a comfort on which I have only one drawback; and it is

the reflection that I make without being able to help it, on the style and nature of my constant experience, which has taught me that what I hope for with most pleasure, is the very thing in which I am most likely to meet with a disappointment;—but sufficient to the past is the evil thereof; let futurity speak for itself.

On Monday last—for headaches and other matters, prevented our going sooner, Mrs. Throck. carried us to Chicheley, viz. Mr. Chester's. It seemed as if all the world was there to meet us, though in fact there was not above half of it, their own family, which is very numerous, excepted. The Bishop of Norwich was there, that is to say, the little Doctor Lewis Bagot, and his lady. She is handsome, and he in all respects what a Bishop should be. Besides these, Mrs. Praed was there, and her sister, Miss Backwell. There might be many others, but if there were, I overlooked them. 'Foresaid little Bishop and I had much talk about many things, but most about Homer. I have not room to particularize, and will therefore sum up the whole with observing, that both with respect to our ideas of the original, of Pope's translation, and of the sort of translation that is wanted, we were perfectly at an agreement. As to the house, it is handsome, so is the pleasure-ground, and so are all the gardens, which are not less, I believe, than four in number. With respect to the family themselves, they are all amiable, and our visit was a very agreeable one.

We sent over to Olney this morning to enquire after the hamper; but the answer of Rogers was, that he and his book-keeper had searched the warehouse for parcels directed hither, but could find none. Either,

therefore, something prevented your sending it at the time you mentioned, or it must have reached the inn too late, in which case we shall have it by the next waggon.

I write both to the General and to Mr. Hill by this post, the latter advises me to abstain from Homer, but I might as well advise him to abstain from parchment.

My dearest—farewell.

Thine ever,

WM. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Nov. 27, 1787.

It is the part of wisdom, my dearest cousin, to sit down contented under the demands of necessity, because they are such. I am sensible that you cannot in my uncle's present infirm state, and of which it is not possible to expect any considerable amendment, indulge either us, or yourself, with a journey to Weston. Yourself I say, both because I know it will give you pleasure to see *Causidice mi*[1] once more, especially in the comfortable abode where you have placed him, and because after so long an imprisonment in London, you who love the country and have a taste for it, would of course be glad to return to it. For my own part, to me it is ever new, and though I have now been an inhabitant of this village a twelvemonth,

[1] The appellation which Sir Thomas Hesketh used to give him in jest, when he was of the Temple.

and have during the half of that time been at liberty to expatiate, and to make discoveries, I am daily finding out fresh scenes and walks, which you would never be satisfied with enjoying;—some of them are unapproachable by you either on foot or in your carriage. Had you twenty toes (whereas I suppose you have but ten) you could not reach them; and coach wheels have never been seen there since the flood. Before it indeed, (as Burnet says that the earth was then perfectly free from all inequalities in its surface,) they might have been seen there every day. We have other walks both upon hill tops and in valleys beneath, some of which by the help of your carriage, and many of them without its help, would be always at your command.

On Monday morning last, Sam brought me word that there was a man in the kitchen who desired to speak with me. I ordered him in. A plain, decent, elderly figure made its appearance, and being desired to sit, spoke as follows: "Sir, I am clerk of the parish of All-Saints, in Northampton; brother of Mr. Cox the upholsterer. It is customary for the person in my office to annex to a bill of mortality, which he publishes at Christmas, a copy of verses. You would do me a great favour, Sir, if you would furnish me with one." To this I replied, "Mr. Cox, you have several men of genius in your town, why have you not applied to some of them? There is a namesake of yours in particular, Cox the statuary, who, every body knows, is a first-rate maker of verses. He surely is the man of all the world for your purpose."—"Alas! Sir, I

have heretofore borrowed help from him, but he is a gentleman of so much reading, that the people of our town cannot understand him." I confess to you, my dear, I felt all the force of the compliment implied in this speech, and was almost ready to answer, Perhaps, my good friend, they may find me unintelligible too for the same reason. But on asking him whether he had walked over to Weston on purpose to implore the assistance of my Muse, and on his replying in the affirmative, I felt my mortified vanity a little consoled, and pitying the poor man's distress which appeared to be considerable, promised to supply him. The waggon has accordingly gone this day to Northampton loaded in part with my effusions in the mortuary style. A fig for poets who write epitaphs upon individuals! I have written *one*, that serves *two hundred* persons.

A few days since, I received a second very obliging letter from Mr. Mackenzie. He tells me that his own papers, which are by far, he is sorry to say it, the most numerous, are marked V. I. Z. Accordingly, my dear, I am happy to find that I am engaged in a correspondence with Mr. Viz, a gentleman for whom I have always entertained the profoundest veneration. But the serious fact is, that the papers distinguished by those signatures have ever pleased me most, and struck me as the work of a sensible man, who knows the world well, and has more of Addison's delicate humour than any body.

A poor man begged food at the Hall lately. The cook gave him some vermicelli soup. He ladled it about sometime with the spoon, and then returned it to her, saying, "I am a poor man it is true, and I am

very hungry, but yet I cannot eat broth with maggots in it." Once more, my dear, a thousand thanks for your box full of good things, useful things, and beautiful things.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 4, 1787.

I AM glad, my dearest Coz, that my last letter proved so diverting. You may assure yourself of the literal truth of the whole narration, and that however droll, it was not in the least indebted to any embellishments of mine.

You say well, my dear, that in Mr. Throckmorton we have a peerless neighbour; we have so. In point of information upon all important subjects, in respect too of expression and address, and in short, every thing that enters into the idea of a gentleman, I have not found his equal, not often, any where. Were I asked who in my judgement approaches nearest to him in all his amiable qualities and qualifications, I should certainly answer his brother George, who if he be not his exact counterpart, endued with precisely the same measure of the same accomplishments, is nevertheless deficient in none of them, and is of a character singularly agreeable, in respect of a certain manly, I had almost said, heroic frankness, with which his air strikes one almost immediately. So far as his opportunities have gone, he has ever been as friendly and obliging to us as we could wish him, and were he

lord of the Hall to morrow, would I dare say conduct himself toward us in such a manner, as to leave us as little sensible as possible of the removal of its present owners. But all this I say, my dear, merely for the sake of stating the matter as it is; not in order to obviate, or to prove the inexpedience of any future plans of yours, concerning the place of our residence. Providence and time shape every thing; I should rather say Providence alone, for time has often no hand in the wonderful changes that we experience; they take place in a moment. It is not therefore worth while perhaps to consider much what we will or will not do in years to come, concerning which all that I can say with certainty at present is, that those years will be to me the most welcome, in which I can see the most of you.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Dec. 6, 1787.

A SHORT time since, by the help of Mrs. Throckmorton's chaise, Mrs. Unwin and I reached Chicheley. "Now," said I to Mrs. Chester, "I shall write boldly to your brother Walter, and will do it immediately. I have passed the gulf that parted us, and he will be glad to hear it." But let not the man who translates Homer be so presumptuous as to have a will of his own, or to promise any thing. A fortnight, I suppose, has elapsed since I paid this visit, and I am only now beginning to fulfil what I then undertook to

accomplish without delay. The old Grecian must answer for it.

I spent my morning there so agreeably, that I have ever since regretted more sensibly, that there are five miles of a dirty country interposed between us. For the increase of my pleasure, I had the good fortune to find your brother the Bishop there. We had much talk about many things, but most, I believe, about Homer; and great satisfaction it gave me to find, that on the most important points of that subject his Lordship and I were exactly of one mind. In the course of our conversation he produced from his pocket-book a translation of the first ten or twelve lines of the Iliad, and in order to leave my judgement free, informed me kindly at the same time that they were not his own. I read them, and according to the best of my recollection of the original, found them well executed. The Bishop indeed acknowledged that they were not faultless, neither did I find them so. Had they been such, I should have felt their perfection as a discouragement hardly to be surmounted; for at that passage I have laboured more abundantly than at any other, and hitherto with the least success. I am convinced that Homer placed it at the threshold of his work as a scarecrow to all translators. Now, Walter, if thou knowest the author of this version, and it be not treason against thy brother's confidence in thy secrecy, declare him to me. Had I been so happy as to have seen the Bishop again before he left this country, I should certainly have asked him the question, having a curiosity upon the matter that is extremely troublesome.

The awkward situation in which you found yourself on receiving a visit from an authoress, whose works though presented to you long before, you had never read, made me laugh, and it was no sin against my friendship for you, to do so. It was a ridiculous distress, and I can laugh at it even now. I hope she catechised you well. How did you extricate yourself? Now laugh at me. The clerk of the parish of All Saints, in the town of Northampton, having occasion for a poet, has appointed me to the office. I found myself obliged to comply. The bellman comes next, and then, I think, though even borne upon your swan's quill, I can soar no higher!

I am, my dear friend, faithfully yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 10, 1787.

I THANK you for the snip of cloth, commonly called a pattern. At present I have two coats, and but one back. If at any time hereafter I should find myself possessed of fewer coats, or more backs, it will be of use to me.

Even as you suspect, my dear, so it proved. The ball was prepared for, the ball was held, and the ball passed, and we had nothing to do with it. Mrs. Throckmorton, knowing our trim, did not give us the pain of an invitation, for a pain it would have been. And why? as Sternhold says,—because, as Hopkins answers, we must have refused it. But it fell out sin-

gularly enough, that this ball was held, of all days in the year, on my birth day—and so I told them—but not till it was all over.

Though I have thought proper never to take any notice of the arrival of my MSS. together with the *other good things* in the box, yet certain it is, that I received them. I have furbished up the tenth book till it is as bright as silver, and am now occupied in bestowing the same labour upon the eleventh. The twelfth and thirteenth are in the hands of ——, and the fourteenth and fifteenth are ready to succeed them. This notable job is the delight of my heart, and how sorry shall I be when it is ended.

The smith and the carpenter, my dear, are both in the room, hanging a bell; if I therefore make a thousand blunders, let the said intruders answer for them all.

I thank you, my dear, for your history of the G—s. What changes in that family! And how many thousand families have in the same time experienced changes as violent as theirs! The course of a rapid river is the justest of all emblems, to express the variableness of our scene below. Shakspeare says, none ever bathed himself twice in the same stream, and it is equally true that the world upon which we close our eyes at night is never the same with that on which we open them in the morning.

I do not always say, give my love to my uncle, because he knows that I always love him. I do not always present Mrs. Unwin's love to you, partly for the same reason, (Deuce take the smith and the carpenter!)

and partly because I forget it. But to present my own I forget never, for I always have to finish my letter, which I know not how to do, my dearest coz, without telling you that I am

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

DEAR SIR, Weston, Dec. 13, 1787.

UNLESS my memory deceives me, I forewarned you that I should prove a very unpunctual correspondent. The work that lies before me engages unavoidably my whole attention. The length of it, the spirit of it, and the exactness that is requisite to its due performance, are so many most interesting subjects of consideration to me, who find that my best attempts are only introductory to others, and that what to day I suppose finished, to-morrow I must begin again. Thus it fares with a translator of Homer. To exhibit the majesty of such a poet in a modern language is a task that no man can estimate the difficulty of till he attempts it. To paraphrase him loosely, to hang him with trappings that do not belong to him, all this is comparatively easy. But to represent him with only his own ornaments, and still to preserve his dignity, is a labour that, if I hope in any measure to achieve it, I am sensible can only be achieved by the most assiduous and most unremitting attention. Our studies, however different in themselves, in respect of the means by which they are to be successfully carried on, bear some resemblance to each other. A perseverance that

nothing can discourage, a minuteness of observation that suffers nothing to escape, and a determination not to be seduced from the straight line that lies before us, by any images with which fancy may present us, are essentials that should be common to us both. There are perhaps few arduous undertakings, that are not in fact more arduous than we at first supposed them. As we proceed, difficulties increase upon us, but our hopes gather strength also, and we conquer difficulties which, could we have foreseen them, we should never have had the boldness to encounter. May this be your experience, as I doubt not that it will. You possess by nature all that is necessary to success in the profession that you have chosen. What remains is in your own power. They say of poets, that they must be born such: so must mathematicians, so must great generals, and so must lawyers, and so indeed must men of all denominations, or it is not possible that they should excel. But with whatever faculties we are born, and to whatever studies our genius may direct us, studies they must still be. I am persuaded, that Milton did not write his Paradise Lost, nor Homer his Iliad, nor Newton his Principia, without immense labour. Nature gave them a bias to their respective pursuits, and that strong propensity, I suppose, is what we mean by genius. The rest they gave themselves. "*Macte esto*," therefore, have no fears for the issue!

I have had a second kind letter from your friend Mr. ———, which I have just answered. I must not I find hope to see him here, at least I must not much expect it. He has a family that does not permit him

to fly southward. I have also a notion, that we three could spend a few days comfortably together, especially in a country like this, abounding in scenes with which I am sure you would both be delighted. Having lived till lately at some distance from the spot that I now inhabit, and having never been master of any sort of vehicle whatever, it is but just now that I begin myself to be acquainted with the beauties of our situation. To you I may hope, one time or other, to show them, and shall be happy to do it, when an opportunity offers.

Yours, most affectionately,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Dec. 19, 1787 (in Post mark).

SATURDAY, my dearest cousin, was a day of receipts. In the morning I received a box filled with an abundant variety of stationery ware, containing, in particular, a quantity of paper sufficient, well covered with good writing, to immortalize any man. I have nothing to do, therefore, but to cover it as aforesaid, and my name will never die. In the evening I received a smaller box, but still more welcome on account of its contents. It contained an almanack in red morocco, a pencil of a new invention, called an everlasting pencil, and a noble purse, with a noble gift in it, called a Bank note for twenty-five pounds. I need use no arguments to assure you, my cousin, that by the help of ditto note, we shall be able to fadge very comfort-

ably till Christmas is turned, without having the least occasion to draw upon you. By the post yesterday—that is, Sunday morning—I received also a letter from Anonymous, giving me advice of the kind present which I have just particularized; in which letter allusion is made to a certain piece by me composed, entitled, I believe, the Drop of Ink. The only copy I ever gave of that piece, I gave to yourself. It is *possible*, therefore, that between you and *Anonymous* there may be some communication. If that should be the case, I will beg you just to signify to him, as opportunity may occur, the safe arrival of his most acceptable present, and my most grateful sense of it.

My toothache is in a great measure, that is to say, almost entirely removed; not by snipping my ears, as poor Lady Strange's ears were snipped, nor by any other chirurgical operation, except such as I could perform myself. The manner of it was as follows: we dined last Thursday at the Hall; I sat down to table, trembling lest the tooth, of which I told you in my last, should not only refuse its own office, but hinder all the rest. Accordingly, in less than five minutes, by a hideous dislocation of it, I found myself not only in great pain, but under an absolute prohibition not only to eat, but to speak another word. Great emergencies sometimes meet the most effectual remedies. I resolved, if it were possible, then and there to draw it. This I effected so dexterously by a sudden twitch, and afterwards so dexterously conveyed it into my pocket, that no creature present, not even Mrs. Unwin, who sat facing me, was sensible either of my distress, or of the manner of my deliverance from it.

I am poorer by one tooth than I was, but richer by the unimpeded use of all the rest.

When I lived in the Temple, I was rather intimate with a son of the late Admiral Rowley and a younger brother of the present Admiral. Since I wrote to you last, I received a letter from him, in a very friendly and affectionate style. It accompanied half a dozen books, which I had lent him five and twenty years ago, and which he apologized for having kept so long, telling me that they had been sent to him at Dublin by mistake; for at Dublin, it seems, he now resides. Reading my poems, he felt, he said, his friendship for me revive, and wrote accordingly. I have now, therefore, a correspondent in Ireland, another in Scotland, and a third in Wales. All this would be very diverting, had I a little more time to spare to them.

My dog, my dear is a spaniel. Till Miss Gunning begged him, he was the property of a farmer, and while he was their property had been accustomed to lie in the chimney corner, among the embers, till the hair was singed from his back, and till nothing was left of his tail but the gristle. Allowing for these disadvantages, he is really handsome; and when nature shall have furnished him with a new coat, a gift which, in consideration of the ragged condition of his old one, it is hoped she will not long delay, he will then be unrivalled in personal endowments by any dog in this country. He and my cat are excessively fond of each other, and play a thousand gambols together that it is impossible not to admire.

Know thou, that from this time forth, the post

comes daily to Weston. This improvement is effected by an annual subscription of ten shillings. The Throcks invited us to the measure, and we have acceded to it. Their servant will manage this concern for us at the Olney post office, and the subscription is to pay a man for stumping three times a week from Olney to Newport Pagnel, and back again.

Returning from my walk to-day, while I was passing by some small closes at the back of the town, I heard the voices of some persons extremely merry at the top of the hill. Advancing into the large field behind our house, I there met Mr. Throck, wife, and brother George. Combine in your imagination as large proportions as you can of earth and water intermingled so as to constitute what is commonly called mud, and you will have but an imperfect conception of the quantity that had attached itself to her petticoats: but she had half-boots, and laughed at her own figure. She told me that she had this morning transcribed sixteen pages of my Homer. I observed in reply, that to write so much, and to gather all that dirt, was no bad morning's work, considering the shortness of the days at this season.

Yours, my dear,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, Dec. 24, 1787.

THE Throcks do not leave Weston till after Easter. But this I hope will have no effect upon your movements, should an opportunity present itself to you of

coming sooner. We dined there last Saturday. After dinner, while we all sat round the fire, I told them, as I related it to you, the adventure of my tooth. This drew from Mrs. Throck, (singular as it must appear,) a tale the very counterpart of mine. She, in like manner, had a tooth to draw, while I was drawing mine; and thus it came to pass (the world, I suppose, could not furnish such another instance) that we two, without the least intimation to each other of our respective distress, were employed in the same moment, sitting side by side, in drawing each a tooth: an operation which we performed with equal address, and without being perceived by any one.

This morning had very near been a tragical one to me, beyond all that have ever risen upon me. Mrs. Unwin rose as usual at seven o'clock; at eight she came to me, and showed me her bed-gown with a great piece burnt out of it. Having lighted her fire, which she always lights herself, she placed the candle upon the hearth. In a few moments it occurred to her that, if it continued there, it might possibly set fire to her clothes, therefore she put it out. But in fact, though she had not the least suspicion of it, her clothes were on fire at that very time. She found herself uncommonly annoyed by smoke, such as brought the water into her eyes; supposing that some of the billets might lie too forward, she disposed them differently; but finding the smoke increase, and grow more troublesome, (for by this time the room was filled with it,) she cast her eye downward, and perceived not only her bed-gown, but her petticoat on fire. She

had the presence of mind to gather them in her hand, and plunge them immediately into the basin, by which means the general conflagration of her person, which must probably have ensued in a few moments, was effectually prevented. Thus was that which I have often heard from the pulpit, and have often had occasion myself to observe, most clearly illustrated,—that, secure as we may sometimes seem to ourselves, we are in reality never so safe as to have no need of a superintending Providence. Danger can never be at a distance from creatures who dwell in houses of clay. Therefore take care of thyself, gentle Yahoo! and may a more vigilant than thou care for thee.

On the day when we dined as abovementioned at the Hall, Mrs. Throck had paid a morning visit at * * * *. When I enquired how she found Mrs. * * *, her account of her was as follows: "They say she is much better, but to judge by her looks and her manner, there is no ground to think so. She looks dreadfully, and talks in a rambling way without ceasing." If this be a just description of her, and I do not at all doubt it, I am afraid, poor woman! that she is far from well, notwithstanding all that the physician of minds has done for her. In effect there is but One who merits that title; and were all the frantic who have been restored to their reason to make a reasonable use of it, they would acknowledge that God, and not man, had cured them.

I thank you, my dear, for your intentions to furnish me, had I not been otherwise accommodated with one, with an everlasting pencil. You may yet perhaps, on

some distant day, have an opportunity to fulfil those intentions, for " everlasting," as it is called, it is not such in point of duration; but claims the title on this account only, that in the using, it perpetually works itself to a point, and never wants cutting. Otherwise it wastes and wears, as every thing made of earthly materials must.

When the Throcks happen to mention the chairs again, your directions shall be pursued. As to the balance due on the plate account, it was, before the purchase of the silk handkerchiefs, &c., either six pounds or six guineas—we cannot recollect which. With the remainder, whatever it shall be found to be, Mrs. Unwin will be obliged to you if you will give it in commission to Mrs. Eaton, to buy for her some muslin for aprons, of the sort that you wore when you were at Olney, viz. with cross stripes. She thinks you called it an English muslin. They must be ell and nail long. But at the same time it does not appear probable to either of us, that there should be money remaining in your hands sufficient for this purpose.

I forgot to tell you that my dog is spotted liver-colour and white, or rather white and chestnut. He is at present my pupil as well as dog, and just before I sat down to write I gave him a lesson in the science of fetch and carry. He performs with an animation past all conception, except your own, whose poor head will never forget Tinker. But I am now grown more reasonable, and never make such a dreadful din but when Beau and I are together. To teach him is necessary, in order that he may take the water, and

that is necessary in order that he may be sweet in summer. Farewell, my dearest coz. I am, with Mrs. U.'s affections,

Ever thine, most truly,

WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 1, 1788.

Now for another story almost incredible! A story that would be quite such, if it was not certain that you give me credit for any thing. I have read the poem for the sake of which you sent the paper, and was much entertained by it. You think it perhaps, as very well you may, the only piece of that kind that was ever produced. It is indeed original, for I dare say Mr. Merry never saw mine; but certainly it is not unique. For most true it is, my dear, that ten years since, having a letter to write to a friend of mine, to whom I could write any thing, I filled a whole sheet with a composition, both in measure and in manner precisely similar. I have in vain searched for it. It is either burnt or lost. Could I have found it, you would have had double postage to pay. For that one man in Italy, and another in England, who never saw each other, should stumble on a species of verse, in which no other man ever wrote (and I believe that to be the case), and upon a style and manner too, of which, I suppose, that neither of them had ever seen an example, appears to me so extraordinary a fact, that I must have sent you mine, whatever it had cost you, and am really vexed that I cannot authenticate

the story by producing a voucher. The measure I recollect to have been perfectly the same, and as to the manner, I am equally sure of that, and from this circumstance, that Mrs. Unwin and I never laughed more at any production of mine, perhaps not even at John Gilpin. But for all this, my dear, you must, as I said, give me credit; for the thing itself is gone to that limbo of vanity, where alone, says Milton, things lost on earth are to be met with. Said limbo is, as you know, in the moon, whither I could not at present convey myself without a good deal of difficulty and inconvenience.

This morning being the morning of new year's day, I sent to the Hall a copy of verses, addressed to Mrs. Throckmorton, entitled the Wish, or the Poet's New Year's Gift. We dine there to-morrow, when, I suppose, I shall hear news of them. Their kindness is so great, and they seize with such eagerness every opportunity of doing all they think will please us, that I held myself almost in duty bound to treat them with this stroke of my profession.

The small pox has done, I believe, all that it has to do at Weston. Old folks, and even women with child, have been inoculated. We talk of our freedom, and some of us are free enough, but not the poor. Dependant as they are upon parish bounty, they are sometimes obliged to submit to impositions, which perhaps in France itself could hardly be paralleled. Can man or woman be said to be free, who is commanded to take a distemper, sometimes at least mortal, and in circumstances most likely to make it so? No circumstance whatever was permitted to exempt the

inhabitants of Weston. The old as well as the young, and the pregnant as well as they who had only themselves within them, have been inoculated. Were I asked who is the most arbitrary sovereign on earth? I should answer, neither the king of France, nor the Grand Signior, but an Overseer of the poor in England.

I am as heretofore occupied with Homer: my present occupation is the revisal of all I have done, viz. of the first fifteen books. I stand amazed at my own increasing dexterity in the business, being verily persuaded that, as far as I have gone, I have improved the work to double its former value.

That you may begin the new year and end it in all health and happiness, and many more when the present shall have been long an old one, is the ardent wish of Mrs. Unwin, and of yours, my dearest coz, most cordially,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Jan. 5, 1788.

I THANK you for your information concerning the author of the translation of those lines. Had a man of less note and ability than Lord Bagot produced it, I should have been discouraged. As it is, I comfort myself with the thought, that even he accounted it an achievement worthy of his powers, and that even he found it difficult. Though I never had the honour to be known to his Lordship, I remember him well at Westminster, and the reputation in which he stood there. Since that time I have never seen him, except

once, many years ago, in the House of Commons, when I heard him speak on the subject of a drainage bill better than any member there.

My first thirteen books have been criticised in London; have been by me accommodated to those criticisms, returned to London in their improved state, and sent back to Weston with an *imprimantur*. This would satisfy some poets less anxious than myself about what they expose in public; but it has not satisfied me. I am now revising them again by the light of my own critical taper, and make more alterations than at the first. But are they improvements? you will ask,—Is not the spirit of the work endangered by all this attention to correctness? I think and hope that it is not. Being well aware of the possibility of such a catastrophe, I guard particularly against it. Where I find that a servile adherence to the original would render the passage less animated than it should be, I still, as at the first, allow myself a liberty. On all other occasions I prune with an unsparing hand, determined that there shall not be found in the whole translation an idea that is not Homer's. My ambition is to produce the closest copy possible, and at the same time as harmonious as I know how to make it. This being my object, you will no longer think, if indeed you have thought it at all, that I am unnecessarily and over much industrious. The original surpasses every thing; it is of an immense length, is composed in the best language ever used upon earth, and deserves, indeed demands, all the labour that any translator, be he who he may, can possibly bestow on it. Of this I am sure, and your brother the good bishop is of the

same mind, that, at present, mere English readers know no more of Homer in reality, than if he had never been translated. That consideration indeed it was, which mainly induced me to the undertaking; and if after all, either through idleness, or dotage upon what I have already done, I leave it chargeable with the same incorrectness as my predecessors, or indeed with any other that I may be able to amend, I had better have amused myself otherwise. And you I know are of my opinion.

I send you the clerk's verses, of which I told you. They are very clerklike, as you will perceive. But plain truth in plain words seemed to me to be the *ne plus ultra* of composition on such an occasion. I might have attempted something very fine, but then the persons principally concerned, viz. my readers, would not have understood me. If it puts them in mind that they are mortal, its best end is answered.

My dear Walter, adieu! yours faithfully,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COZ, The Lodge, Jan. 9, 1788.

IT has happened that this day I have had a double share of exercise, and am in consequence a little too weary, and much too sleepy, to be able to write you a very entertaining epistle. In the morning, the sky was of a true January cast, gloomy as black clouds could make it; the wind was cold in the extreme, and now and then it rained. In defiance of all these difficulties I took my walk; not so long a walk indeed as I

generally take, but long enough for the purposes that a walk is designed to answer. At my return, as I was crossing the grove in front of the Hall, I saw all the family coming forth to do as I had done. I joined them, and added their walk to my own :—the effect is such as I have told you. But I will do my best.

We dined there yesterday. As soon as tea-time arrived, I ascended to the ladies, in the library. Mrs. Frog informed me that her husband, at the end of the week, goes to London for a few days, leaving her at Weston. I replied—Then you must dine with us in his absence. (For it has been for some time a settled point, that when they are separated she shall do so.) She consented, but added, What is to become of George?—He shall dine with us too. But Mr. Frog, who has never dined with you yet, will be affronted. —No, he shall not, for when he returns we will ask him too.

And thus it has come to pass, my dear, that without any motion made toward it on our part, we find ourselves obliged to depart from our original resolve. I could not have answered otherwise than I did, without saying virtually,—" Pardon me, madam, we are always ready to partake of your good cheer, but as for our own, that we intend to keep to ourselves." We shall therefore now have occasion for the good things with which you have so plentifully furnished us, and now our knives and forks of the newest construction will come into service. Not that we intend to perform any extraordinary feats in the feast-making way; far from it. We shall measure ourselves and our own ability, not theirs; and shall consider what it becomes

us to give, and them to be content with at our table. After all, we mean not to establish a regular interchange of invitations; neither, I suppose, do they. Our present purpose is to tell them, that whenever it will be convenient to them to take a dinner at the Lodge, we shall always rejoice to see them; and having in that general way discharged the duty that civility and reciprocal hospitality seem to demand from us, there to leave it.

I thought, my dear, having a very sagacious nose in such matters, that your reason for not having answered Mrs. Frog, was not perfectly and altogether sound. I determined therefore, unless she should repeat her question again, (the question, I mean, whether you had taken any notice in your letters to me, of a letter received from her,) to be myself silent upon the matter; having always observed that an excuse, which is not powerful enough to bear down all before it, does more harm than good; the peccadillo, whatever it be, which was before only suspected, is thenceforth ascertained, and in effect acknowledged. It turned out as I expected: she said nothing, and I said nothing; and, I dare say, nothing more will be said of it hereafter.

My verses[1], such as they were, had at least the effect that I wished. They pleased her, him, and theirs, as far as their fame has hitherto extended. Her brother Gifford in particular, who is excessively attached to his sister, and who arrived at the Hall last Sunday, though he has never given the smallest hint that he knows aught about them, has signified to me

[1] The Wish; or, the Poet's New Year's Gift.

sufficiently by his manner, that he has both seen them and is obliged. These remarks of mine should rather have followed than have gone before them; but I am writing to you, and it is no matter; you will be sure to view them with a partial eye, and that may be highly necessary.

Many thanks, my dear, for your kind intentions in the oyster way. My stomach being in point of digestion better than it has been these fourteen years, I am now able to eat them raw. They are more agreeable to me raw than cooked, in whatever manner, and will now therefore be doubly welcome.

Depend upon it as a certainty, that I shall never be found a contributor to an organ at Olney: I never mention that vagary of theirs but with disapprobation. It is not much, indeed, that I say concerning any of their proceedings: they are generally so absurd, that it is impossible to give an opinion of them without offending all the parish.

My dearest coz! Heaven bless thee. I have more to say had I room, but nothing with which I can so well occupy the scanty remnant before me, as the often repeated assurance, and always true, that I am ever most affectionately thine,

WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 19, 1788.

WHEN I have prose enough to fill my paper, which is always the case when I write to you, I cannot find in my heart to give a third part of it to verse. Yet this

I must do, or I must make my packets more costly than worshipful, by doubling the postage upon you, which I should hold to be unreasonable. See then the true reason why I did not send you that same scribblement till you desired it. The thought which naturally presents itself to me on all such occasions is this,—Is not your cousin coming? Why are you impatient? Will it not be time enough to show her your fine things when she arrives?

Fine things indeed I have few. He who has Homer to transcribe may well be contented to do little else. As when an ass, being harnessed with ropes to a sand cart, drags with hanging ears his heavy burthen, neither filling the long echoing streets with his harmonious bray, nor throwing up his heels behind, frolicksome and airy, as asses less engaged are wont to do; so I, satisfied to find myself indispensably obliged to render into the best possible English metre eight and forty Greek books, of which the two finest poems in the world consist, account it quite sufficient, if I may at last achieve that labour; and seldom allow myself those pretty little vagaries, in which I should otherwise delight, and of which, if I should live long enough, I intend hereafter to enjoy my fill.

This is the reason, my dear cousin, if I may be permitted to call you so in the same breath with which I have uttered this truly heroic comparison,—this is the reason why I produce at present but few occasional poems, and the preceding reason is that which may account satisfactorily enough for my withholding the very few that I do produce. A thought sometimes strikes me before I rise; if it runs readily into verse,

and I can finish it before breakfast, it is well; otherwise it dies, and is forgotten; for all the subsequent hours are devoted to Homer.

The day before yesterday, I saw for the first time Bunbury's new print, the Propagation of a Lie. Mr. Throckmorton sent it for the amusement of our party. Bunbury sells humour by the yard, and is, I suppose, the first vender of it who ever did so. He cannot therefore be said to have humour without measure, (pardon a pun, my dear, from a man who has not made one before these forty years,) though he may certainly be said to be immeasurably droll.

The original thought is good, and the exemplification of it, in those very expressive figures, admirable. A poem on the same subject, displaying all that is displayed in those attitudes, and in those features, (for faces they can hardly be called) would be most excellent. The affinity of the two arts, viz. verse and painting, has been observed; possibly the happiest illustration of it would be found, if some poet would ally himself to some draftsman, as Bunbury, and undertake to write every thing he should draw. Then let a musician be admitted of the party. He should compose the said poem, adapting notes to it exactly accommodated to the theme; so should the sister arts be proved to be indeed sisters, and the world die of laughing.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 21, 1788.

YOUR last letter informed us that you were likely to be much occupied for some time in writing on a subject that must be interesting to a person of your feelings,—the Slave Trade. I was unwilling to interrupt your progress in so good a work, and have therefore enjoined myself a longer silence than I should otherwise have thought excusable; though, to say the truth, did not our once intimate fellowship in the things of God recur to my remembrance, and present me with something like a warrant for doing it, I should hardly prevail with myself to write at all. Letters such as mine, to a person of a character such as yours, are like snow in harvest; and you well say, that if I will send you a letter that you can answer, I shall make your part of the business easier than it is. This I would gladly do; but though I abhor a vacuum as much as Nature herself is said to do, yet a vacuum I am bound to feel of all such matter as may merit your perusal.

I expected that before this time I should have had the pleasure of seeing your friend Mr. Bean, but his stay in this country was so short, that it was hardly possible he should find an opportunity to call. I have not only heard a high character of that gentleman from yourself, whose opinion of men as well as of other matters, weighs more with me than any body's; but from two or three different persons likewise, not ill qualified to judge. From all that I have heard, both from you and them, I have every reason to ex-

pect that I shall find him both an agreeable and useful neighbour; and if he can be content with me, (for that seems doubtful, poet as I am, and now, alas! nothing more,) it seems certain that I shall be highly satisfied with him.

Here is much shifting and changing of ministers. Two are passing away, and two are stepping into their places. Mr. Bull, I suppose, whom I know not, is almost upon the wing; and Mr. Postlethwaite, with whom I have not been very much acquainted, is either going or gone. A Mr. C—— is come to occupy, for the present at least, the place of the former; and if he can possess himself of the two curacies of Ravenstone and Weston, will, I imagine, take up his abode here. He lives now with Mr. Socket, who is lately become an inhabitant of our village, and having, as I understand, no engagements elsewhere, he will doubtless be happy to obtain a lasting one in this country. What acceptance he finds among the people of Ravenstone I have not heard; but at Olney, where he has preached once, he was hailed as the sun by the Greenlanders after half a year of lamp-light. The *connoisseurs* in preaching, or rather perhaps in preachers, affirm that he resembles Mr. Whitefield more than any man ever did, *save and except himself the said Mr. Whitefield.* Thus they speak of him at present; but the same persons had nearly the same opinion of Mr. P**, of wife-beating memory, for which reason I find myself rather slow to suppose them infallible.

Providence interposed to preserve me from the heaviest affliction that I can now suffer, or I had lately lost Mrs. Unwin, and in a way the most shocking

imaginable. Having kindled her fire in the room where she dresses, (an office that she always performs for herself,) she placed the candle on the hearth, and, kneeling, addressed herself to her devotions. A thought struck her, while thus occupied, that the candle being short might possibly catch her clothes. She pinched it out with the tongs, and set it on the table. In a few minutes the chamber was so filled with smoke that her eyes watered, and it was hardly possible to see across it. Supposing that it proceeded from the chimney, she pushed the billets backward, and while she did so, casting her eye downward, perceived that her bed-gown was on fire. In fact, before she extinguished the candle, the mischief that she apprehended was begun; and when she related the matter to me, she showed me her bed-gown with a hole burnt in it as large as this sheet, and her petticoat burnt also in two places. It is not possible, perhaps, that so tragical a death should overtake a person actually engaged in prayer,—for her escape seems almost a miracle. Her presence of mind, by which she was enabled, without calling for help or waiting for it, to gather up her clothes and plunge them, burning as they were, in water, seems as wonderful a part of the occurrence as any. The very report of fire, though distant, has rendered hundreds torpid and incapable of self-succour; how much more was such a disability to be expected, when the fire had not seized a neighbour's house, or begun its devastations on our own, but was actually consuming the apparel that she wore, and seemed in possession of her person?

It draws toward supper-time. I therefore heartily

wish you a good night; and with our best affections to yourself, Mrs. Newton, and Miss Catlett, I remain, my dear friend, truly and warmly yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, Jan. 30, 1788.

It is a fortnight since I heard from you,—that is to say, a week longer than you have accustomed me to wait for a letter. I do not forget that you have recommended it to me on occasions somewhat similar, to banish all anxiety, and to ascribe your silence only to the interruptions of company. Good advice, my dear, but not easily taken by a man circumstanced as I am. I have learned in the school of adversity, a school from which I have no expectation that I shall ever be dismissed, to apprehend the worst, and have ever found it the only course in which I can indulge myself without the least danger of incurring a disappointment. This kind of experience, continued through many years, has given me such an habitual bias to the gloomy side of every thing, that I never have a moment's ease on any subject to which I am not indifferent. How then can I be easy, when I am left afloat upon a sea of endless conjectures, of which you furnish the occasion? Write, I beseech you, and do not forget that I am now a battered actor upon this turbulent stage; that what little vigour of mind I ever had, of the self-supporting kind I mean, has long since been broken; and that though I can bear nothing well, yet any thing better than a state of ignorance concerning your wel-

fare. I have spent hours in the night leaning upon my elbow and wondering what your silence means. I entreat you once more to put an end to these speculations, which cost me more animal spirits than I can spare; if you cannot without great trouble to yourself, which in your situation may very possibly be the case, contrive opportunities of writing so frequently as usual, only say it, and I am content. I will wait, if you desire it, as long for every letter,—but then let them arrive at the period once fixed, exactly at the time, for my patience will not hold out an hour beyond it.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 1, 1788.

PARDON me, my dearest cousin, the mournful ditty that I sent you last. There are times when I see every thing through a medium that distresses me to an insupportable degree, and that letter was written in one of them. A fog that had for three days obliterated all the beauties of Weston, and a north-east wind, might possibly contribute not a little to the melancholy that indited it. But my mind is now easy; your letter has made it so, and I feel myself as blithe as a bird in comparison. I love you, my cousin, and cannot suspect, either with or without cause, the least evil in which you may be concerned, without being greatly troubled! Oh trouble! the portion of all mortals,—but mine in particular, would I had never known thee, or could bid thee farewell for ever; for I meet thee at every turn; my pillows are stuffed with thee,

my very roses smell of thee, and even my cousin, who would cure me of all trouble if she could, is sometimes innocently the cause of trouble to me.

I now see the unreasonableness of my late trouble, and would, if I could trust myself so far, promise never again to trouble either myself or you in the same manner, unless warranted by some more substantial ground of apprehension.

What I said concerning Homer, my dear, was spoken, or rather written, merely under the influence of a certain jocularity that I felt at that moment. I am in reality so far from thinking myself an ass, and my translation a sand-cart, that I rather seem, in my own account of the matter, one of those flaming steeds harnessed to the chariot of Apollo, of which we read in the works of the ancients. I have lately, I know not how, acquired a certain superiority to myself in this business, and in this last revisal have elevated the expression to a degree far surpassing its former boast. A few evenings since I had an opportunity to try how far I might venture to expect such success of my labours as can alone repay them, by reading the first book of my Iliad to a friend of ours. He dined with you once at Olney. His name is Greatheed, a man of letters and of taste. He dined with us, and the evening proving dark and dirty, we persuaded him to take a bed. I entertained him as I tell you. He heard me with great attention, and with evident symptoms of the highest satisfaction, which, when I had finished the exhibition, he put out of all doubt by expressions which I cannot repeat. Only this he said to Mrs. Unwin while I was in another room, that he

had never entered into the spirit of Homer before, nor had any thing like a due conception of his manner. This I have said, knowing that it will please you, and will now say no more.

Adieu!—my dear, will you never speak of coming to Weston more?

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, Feb. 7, 1788.

THANKS beforehand for the books which you give me to expect. They will all be welcome. Of the two editions of Shakespeare I prefer that which is printed in the largest type, independent of all other considerations. Don Quixote by any hand must needs be welcome, and by Smollett's especially, because I have never seen it. He had a drollery of his own, which, for aught I know, may suit an English taste as well as that of Cervantes, perhaps better, because to us somewhat more intelligible.

It is pretty well known, (the clerk took care it should be so,) both at Northampton and in this county, who wrote the Mortuary Verses. All that I know of their success is, that he sent a bundle of them to Maurice Smith at Olney, who sold them for threepence a piece,—a high price for a *Memento Mori*, a commodity not generally in great request. The other small poem, addressed to Mrs. Throck, has given, as I understand, great satisfaction at Bucklands. The old baronet and his lady, having heard that such a piece existed, (Mrs. Bromley Chester, I suppose, must

have been their informant,) wrote to desire a copy. A copy was sent, and they answered it with warm encomiums.

Mr. Bull, the lame curate, having been lately preferred to a living, another was of course wanted to supply his place. By the recommendation of Mr. Romaine, a Mr. C * * * came down. He lodges at Mr. Socket's in this village, and Mr. Socket lives in the small house to which you had once conceived a liking. Our lacquey is also clerk of the parish. C * * * a day or two after his arrival had a corpse to bury at Weston. Having occasion to consult with the clerk concerning this matter, he sought him in our kitchen. Samuel entered the study to inform us that there was a clergyman without: he was accordingly invited in, and in he came. We had but lately dined; the wine was on the table, and he drank three glasses while the corpse in question was getting ready for its last journey. The moment he entered the room, I felt myself incurably prejudiced against him: his features, his figure, his address, and all that he uttered, confirmed that prejudice, and I determined, having once seen him, to see him no more. Two days after he overtook me in the village. "Your humble servant, Mr. Cowper! a fine morning, sir, for a walk. I had liked to have called on you yesterday morning to tell you that I had become your near neighbour. I live at Mr. Socket's." I answered without looking at him, as drily as possible,—"Are you come to stay any time in the country?"—He believed he was.—"Which way," I replied, "are you going? to Olney?"—"Yes."—"I am going to Mr. Throckmorton's garden, and I

wish you a good day, sir."—I was in fact going to Olney myself, but this rencontre gave me such a violent twist another way that I found it impossible to recover that direction, and accordingly there we parted. All this I related at the Hall the next time we dined there, describing also my apprehensions and distress lest, whether I would or not, I should be obliged to have intercourse with a man to me so perfectly disagreeable. A good deal of laugh and merriment ensued, and there for that time it ended. The following Sunday, in the evening, I received a note to this purport: "Mr. C***'s compliments," &c. Understanding that my friends at the Hall were to dine with me the next day, he took the liberty to invite himself to eat a bit of mutton with me, being sure that I should be happy to introduce him. Having read the note, I threw it to Mrs. Unwin. "There," said I, "take that and read it; then tell me if it be not an effort of impudence the most extraordinary you ever heard of." I expected some such push from the man; I knew he was equal to it. She read it, and we were both of a mind. I sat down to my desk, and with a good deal of emotion gave it just such an answer as it would have deserved had it been genuine. But having heard by accident in the morning that he spells his name with a C, and observing in the note that it was spelt with a K, a suspicion struck me that it was a fiction. I looked at it more attentively and perceived that it was directed by Mrs. Throck. The inside I found afterwards was written by her brother George. This served us with another laugh on the subject, and I have hardly seen, and never spoken to, Mr. C***

since. So, my dear, *that's the little story I promised you.*

Mr. Bull called here this morning: from him I learn what follows concerning P * * *. He waited on the Bishop of London, like a blundering ignoramus as he is, without his canonicals. The Bishop was highly displeased, as he had cause to be; and having pretty significantly given him to know it, addressed himself to his chaplain with tokens of equal displeasure, enjoining him never more to admit a clergyman to him in such attire. To pay this visit he made a journey from Clapham to town on horseback. His horse he left at an inn on the Lambeth side of Westminster Bridge. Thence he proceeded to the Bishop's, and from the Bishop's to Mr. Scott. Having finished this last visit he begged Mr. Scott's company to the inn where he had left his horse, which he said was at the foot of *London* Bridge. Thither they went, but neither the inn nor the horse were there. Then, says P * * *, it must be at Blackfriars' Bridge that I left it. Thither also they went, but to as little purpose. Luckily for him there was but one more bridge, and there they found it. To make the poor youth amends for all these misadventures, it so happened that the incumbent, his predecessor, died before the crops of last year were reaped. The whole profits of that year, by consequence, go into P.'s pocket, which was never so stuffed before.

Good night, my dearest coz. Mrs. Unwin's love attends you.

Affectionately yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO MRS. KING, PERTENHALL, NEAR KIMBOLTON, HUNTS.

Weston Lodge, near Olney, Bucks,
DEAR MADAM, Feb. 12, 1788.

A LETTER from a lady who was once intimate with my brother, could not fail of being most acceptable to me. I lost him just in the moment when those truths which have recommended my volumes to your approbation, were become his daily sustenance, as they had long been mine. But the will of God was done. I have sometimes thought that had his life been spared, being made brothers by a stricter tie than ever in the bands of the same faith, hope, and love, we should have been happier in each other than it was in the power of mere natural affection to make us. But it was his blessing to be taken from a world in which he had no longer any wish to continue; and it will be mine, if while I dwell in it, my time may not be altogether wasted. In order to effect that good end, I wrote what I am happy to find it has given you pleasure to read. But for that pleasure, madam, you are indebted neither to me, nor to my Muse; but, (as you are well aware,) to Him who alone can make divine truths palatable, in whatever vehicle conveyed. It is an established philosophical axiom, that nothing can communicate what it has not in itself; but in the effects of Christian communion, a very strong exception is found to this general rule, however self-evident it may seem. A man himself destitute of all spiritual consolation, may, by occasion, impart it to others. Thus I, it seems, who wrote those very poems to amuse

a mind oppressed with melancholy, and who have myself derived from them no other benefit, (for mere success in authorship will do me no good,) have nevertheless, by so doing, comforted others, at the same time that they administer to me no consolation. But I will proceed no farther in this strain, lest my prose should damp a pleasure that my verse has happily excited. On the contrary, I will endeavour to rejoice in your joy, and especially because I have been myself the instrument of conveying it.

Since the receipt of your obliging letter, I have naturally had recourse to my recollection to try if it would furnish me with the name that I find at the bottom of it. At the same time, I am aware that there is nothing more probable than that my brother might be honoured with your friendship without mentioning it to me; for except a very short period before his death, we lived necessarily at a considerable distance from each other. Ascribe it, madam, not to an impertinent curiosity, but to a desire of better acquaintance with you, if I take the liberty to ask, (since ladies' names, at least, are changeable,) whether yours was at that time the same as now?

Sincerely wishing you all happiness, and especially that which I am sure you covet most, the happiness which is from above, I remain, dear madam—early as it may seem to say it,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

DEAR SIR, The Lodge, Feb. 14, 1788.

THOUGH it be long since I received your last, I have not yet forgotten the impression it made upon me, nor how sensibly I felt myself obliged by your unreserved and friendly communications. I will not apologize for my silence in the interim, because apprized as you are of my present occupation, the excuse that I might allege will present itself to you of course, and to dilate upon it would therefore be waste of paper.

You are in possession of the best security imaginable for the due improvement of your time, which is a just sense of its value. Had I been, when at your age, as much affected by that important consideration as I am at present, I should not have devoted, as I did, all the earliest parts of my life to amusement only. I am now in the predicament into which the thoughtlessness of youth betrays nine-tenths of mankind, who never discover that the health and good spirits which generally accompany it, are in reality blessings only according to the use we make of them, till advanced years begin to threaten them with the loss of both. How much wiser would thousands have been than now they ever will be, had a puny constitution, or some occasional infirmity, constrained them to devote those hours to study and reflection, which for want of some such check they have given entirely to dissipation! I therefore account you happy, who young as you are, need not be informed that you cannot always be so; and who already know that the materials, upon which age can alone build its comfort, should be brought

together at an earlier period. You have indeed, in losing a father, lost a friend, but you have not lost his instructions. His example was not buried with him; but happily for you, (happily because you are desirous to avail yourself of it,) still lives in your remembrance, and is cherished in your best affections.

Your last letter was dated from the house of a gentleman, who was, I believe, my schoolfellow. For the Mr. C———, who lived at Watford, while I had any connexion with Hertfordshire, must have been the father of the present, and according to his age, and the state of his health, when I saw him last, must have been long dead. I never was acquainted with the family further than by report, which always spoke honourably of them, though in all my journeys to and from my father's I must have passed the door. The circumstance however reminds me of the beautiful reflection of Glaucus in the sixth Iliad; beautiful as well for the affecting nature of the observation, as for the justness of the comparison, and the incomparable simplicity of the expression. I feel that I shall not be satisfied without transcribing it, and yet perhaps *my* Greek may be difficult to decipher.

Οἵη περ φύλλων γενεὴ, τοιήδε καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
Φύλλα τὰ μέν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη
Τηλεθόωσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη·
Ὣς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ, ἡ μὲν φύει, ἡ δ' ἀπολήγει.

Excuse this piece of pedantry in a man whose Homer is always before him. What would I give that he were living now, and within my reach! I, of all men living, have the best excuse for indulging

such a wish, unreasonable as it may seem, for I have no doubt that the fire of his eye, and the smile of his lips, would put me now and then in possession of his full meaning more effectually than any commentator. I return you many thanks for the elegies which you sent me, both which I think deserving of much commendation. I should requite you but ill by sending you my mortuary verses, neither at present can I prevail on myself to do it, having no frank, and being conscious that they are not worth carriage without one. I have one copy left, and that copy I will keep for you.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 16, 1788.

I HAVE now three letters of yours, my dearest cousin, before me, all written in the space of a week, and must be indeed insensible of kindness, did I not feel yours on this occasion. I cannot describe to you, neither could you comprehend it if I should, the manner in which my mind is sometimes impressed with melancholy on particular subjects. Your late silence was such a subject. I heard, saw, and felt a thousand terrible things which had no real existence, and was haunted by them night and day, till they at last extorted from me the doleful epistle, which I have since wished had been burned before I sent it. But the cloud has passed, and as far as you are concerned, my heart is once more at rest.

Before you gave me the hint, I had once or twice, as I lay on my bed, watching the break of day, rumi-

nated on the subject which, in your last but one, you recommended to me.

Slavery, or a release from slavery, such as the poor negroes have endured, or perhaps both these topics together, appeared to me a theme so important at the present juncture, and at the same time so susceptible of poetical management, that I more than once perceived myself ready to start in that career, could I have allowed myself to desert Homer for so long a time as it would have cost me to do them justice.

While I was pondering these things, the public prints informed me that Miss More was on the point of publication, having actually finished what I had not yet begun. The sight of her advertisement convinced me that my best course would be that to which I felt myself most inclined,—to persevere, without turning aside to attend to any other call, however alluring, in the business I have in hand.

It occurred to me likewise, that I have already borne my testimony in favour of my black brethren; and that I was one of the earliest, if not the first, of those who have in the present day expressed their detestation of the diabolical traffic in question.

On all these accounts I judged it best to be silent, and especially because I cannot doubt that some effectual measures will now be taken to alleviate the miseries of their condition, the whole nation being in possession of the case, and it being impossible also to allege an argument in behalf of man-merchandise, that can deserve a hearing. I shall be glad to see Hannah More's poem; she is a favourite writer with me, and has more nerve and energy both in her thoughts and

language than half the he rhymers in the kingdom. The Thoughts on the Manners of the Great will likewise be most acceptable. I want to learn as much of the world as I can, but to acquire that learning at a distance; and a book with such a title promises fair to serve the purpose effectually.

I recommend it to you, my dear, by all means to embrace the fair occasion, and to put yourself in the way of being squeezed and incommoded a few hours, for the sake of hearing and seeing what you will never have an opportunity to see and hear hereafter,—the trial of a man who has been greater and more feared than the great Mogul himself. Whatever we are at home, we certainly have been tyrants in the East; and if these men have, as they are charged, rioted in the miseries of the innocent, and dealt death to the guiltless with an unsparing hand, may they receive a retribution that shall in future make all governors and judges of ours, in those distant regions, tremble! While I speak thus, I equally wish them acquitted. They were both my schoolfellows, and for Hastings I had a particular value. Farewell.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Feb. 19, 1788.

I HAVE much to thank you for. In the first place for your Sermon; in which you have addressed your brethren with all the delicacy and fidelity that were due both to their character and your own. If they were not impressed by it, it must be because, like the rab-

bies of old, they are less impressible than others. Such I suppose they are, and will be, so long as doctorship and clerical honours of every degree shall have a tendency to make unenlightened simpletons imagine themselves the only interpreters of God. In the next place, for your thoughts on the Slave Trade; in which there is such evidence of conscientious candour and moderation as will make it, I doubt not, to all prudent persons the most satisfactory publication on the subject. It is a subject on which I can ruminate till I feel myself lost in mazes of speculation, never to be unravelled. Could I suppose that the cruel hardships under which millions of that unhappy race have lived and died, were only preparatory to a deliverance to be wrought for them hereafter, like that of Israel out of Egypt, my reasonings would cease, and I should at once acquiesce in a dispensation, severe indeed for a time, but leading to invaluable and everlasting mercies. But there is no room, Scripture affords no warrant for any such expectations. A question then presents itself which I cannot help asking, though conscious that it ought to be suppressed. Is it to be esteemed a sufficient vindication of divine justice, if these miserable creatures, tormented as they have been from generation to generation, shall at last receive some relief, some abatement of their woes, shall not be treated absolutely as brutes for the future? The thousands of them who have already passed into an eternal state, hopeless of any thing better than they found in this life, what is to become of them? Is it essential to the perfection of a plan concerted by infinite wisdom, that such wretches should exist at all,

who from the beginning of their being, through all its endless duration, can experience nothing for which they should say, It is good for us that we were created? These reasonings, and such as these engage me often, and more intensely than I wish them to do, when the case of the poor Negroes occurs to me. I know that the difficulty, if it cannot be solved, may be severed, and that the answer to which it lies open is this or somewhat like it,—God is sovereign: All are his, and he may do what he will with his own: What passes upon this grain of sand, which we call the earth, is trivial when considered with reference to those purposes that have the universe for their object. And lastly—All these things will be accounted for and explained hereafter. An answer like this would have satisfied me once, when I was myself happy; — for I have frequently thought that the happy are easily reconciled to the woes of the miserable. But in the school of affliction I have learned to cavil and to question; and finding myself in my own case reduced frequently to the necessity of accounting for my own lot by the means of an uncontrolable sovereignty which gives no account of its matters, am apt to discover, what appear to me, tremendous effects of the same sovereignty in the case of others. Then I feel—I will not tell you what—and yet I must—a wish that I had never been, a wonder that I am, and an ardent but hopeless desire not to be. Thus have I written to you my whole heart on a subject which I thought to have touched only, and to have left it. But the pen once in my hand, I am no longer master of my own intentions.

To make you some small amends, (the best I can at present,) after having thanked you in the third place, for a basket of most excellent fish, (halibut and lobsters,) I will subjoin some stanzas in the mortuary style, composed at the request of the clerk of All-Saints' parish, Northampton. They were printed at the foot of his Bill of Mortality, published at Christmas last. Some time in November the said clerk was introduced to me one morning before breakfast. Being asked his business, he told me that he wanted verses, and should be much obliged to me if I would furnish them. I replied, that in Northampton there must be many poets, because poets abound every where, and because the newspaper printed there was seldom destitute of a copy. I then mentioned in particular his namesake, Mr. Cox the statuary, who to my knowledge often wooes the Muse, and not without some cause to boast of his success. To which he answered—What you say, Sir, is true. But Mr. Cox is a gentleman of much reading, and the people of our town do not well understand him. He has written for me, but nine in ten of us were stone-blind to his meaning. Finding that he had an answer to all that I could urge, and particularly affected by the eulogium implied in his last, I suffered myself to be persuaded.

We are truly sorry to be informed, as we were by Mr. Bull, that Mrs. Newton is so much indisposed. Our affectionate remembrances and best wishes attend you both.

Yours most sincerely, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 22, 1788.

I DO not wonder that your ears and feelings were hurt by Mr. Burke's severe invective. But you are to know, my dear, or probably you know it already, that the prosecution of public delinquents has always, and in all countries, been thus conducted. The style of a criminal charge of this kind has been an affair settled among orators from the days of Tully to the present; and like all other practices that have obtained for ages, this in particular seems to have been founded originally in reason, and in the necessity of the case.

He who accuses another to the state, must not appear himself unmoved by the view of crimes with which he charges him, lest he should be suspected of fiction, or of precipitancy, or of a consciousness that after all he shall not be able to prove his allegations. On the contrary, in order to impress the minds of his hearers with a persuasion that he himself at least is convinced of the criminality of the prisoner, he must be vehement, energetic, rapid; must call him tyrant, and traitor, and every thing else that is odious, and all this to his face, because all this, bad as it is, is no more than he undertakes to prove in the sequel. And if he cannot prove it he must himself appear in a light very little more desirable, and at the best to have trifled with the tribunal to which he has summoned him.

Thus Tully, in the very first sentence of his oration against Catiline, calls him a monster; a manner of address in which he persisted till said monster, unable

to support the fury of his accuser's eloquence any longer, rose from his seat, elbowed for himself a passage through the crowd, and at last burst from the senate house in an agony, as if the Furies themselves had followed him.

And now, my dear, though I have thus spoken, and have seemed to plead the cause of that species of eloquence which you, and every creature who has your sentiments, must necessarily dislike, perhaps I am not altogether convinced of its propriety. Perhaps, at the bottom, I am much more of opinion that if the charge, unaccompanied by any inflammatory matter and simply detailed, being once delivered into the court and read aloud, the witnesses were immediately examined, and sentence pronounced according to the evidence; not only the process would be shortened, much time and much expense saved, but justice would have at least as fair play as now she has. Prejudice is of no use in weighing the question guilty or not guilty? and the principal aim, end, and effect of such introductory harangues is to create as much prejudice as possible. When you and I therefore shall have the sole management of such a business entrusted to us, we will order it otherwise.

I was glad to learn from the papers that our cousin Henry shone as he did in reading the charge. This must have given much pleasure to the General.

Thy ever affectionate,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, March 3, 1788.

ONE day last week, Mrs. Unwin and I, having taken our morning walk and returning homeward through the wilderness, met the Throckmortons. A minute after we had met them, we heard the cry of hounds at no great distance, and mounting the broad stump of an elm which had been felled, and by the aid of which we were enabled to look over the wall, we saw them. They were all at that time in our orchard; presently we heard a terrier, belonging to Mrs. Throckmorton, which you may remember by the name of Fury, yelping with much vehemence, and saw her running through the thickets within a few yards of us at her utmost speed, as if in pursuit of something which we doubted not was the fox. Before we could reach the other end of the wilderness, the hounds entered also; and when we arrived at the gate which opens into the grove, there we found the whole weary cavalcade assembled. The huntsman dismounting, begged leave to follow his hounds on foot, for he was sure, he said, that they had killed him: a conclusion which I suppose he drew from their profound silence. He was accordingly admitted, and with a sagacity that would not have dishonoured the best hound in the world, pursuing precisely the same track which the fox and the dogs had taken, though he had never had a glimpse of either after their first entrance through the rails, arrived where he found the slaughtered prey. He soon produced dead reynard, and rejoined us in the grove with all his dogs about him. Having an

opportunity to see a ceremony, which I was pretty sure would never fall in my way again, I determined to stay and to notice all that passed with the most minute attention. The huntsman having by the aid of a pitchfork lodged reynard on the arm of an elm, at the height of about nine feet from the ground, there left him for a considerable time. The gentlemen sat on their horses contemplating the fox, for which they had toiled so hard; and the hounds assembled at the foot of the tree, with faces not less expressive of the most rational delight, contemplated the same object. The huntsman remounted; cut off a foot, and threw it to the hounds;—one of them swallowed it whole like a bolus. He then once more alighted, and drawing down the fox by the hinder legs, desired the people, who were by this time rather numerous, to open a lane for him to the right and left. He was instantly obeyed, when throwing the fox to the distance of some yards, and screaming like a fiend, "tear him to pieces"—at least six times repeatedly, he consigned him over absolutely to the pack, who in a few minutes devoured him completely. Thus, my dear, as Virgil says, what none of the gods could have ventured to promise me, time itself, pursuing its accustomed course, has of its own accord presented me with. I have been in at the death of a fox, and you now know as much of the matter as I, who am as well informed as any sportsman in England.

Yours,

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.

Weston Underwood, March 3, 1788.

I OWE you many acknowledgments, dear madam, for that unreserved communication, both of your history and of your sentiments, with which you favoured me in your last. It gives me great pleasure to learn that you are so happily circumstanced, both in respect of situation and frame of mind. With your view of religious subjects, you could not indeed, speaking properly, be pronounced unhappy in any circumstances; but to have received from above not only that faith which reconciles the heart to affliction, but many outward comforts also, and especially that greatest of all earthly comforts, a comfortable home, is happiness indeed. May you long enjoy it! As to health or sickness, you have learned already their true value, and know well that the former is no blessing, unless it be sanctified, and that the latter is one of the greatest we can receive, when we are enabled to make a proper use of it.

There is nothing in my story that can possibly be worth your knowledge; yet, lest I should seem to treat you with a reserve which, at your hands, I have not experienced, such as it is, I will relate it.—I was bred to the law; a profession to which I was never much inclined, and in which I engaged rather because I was desirous to gratify a most indulgent father, than because I had any hopes of success in it myself. I spent twelve years in the Temple, where I made no progress in that science, to cultivate which I was sent thither. During this time my father died. Not long

after him, died my mother-in-law; and at the expiration of it, a melancholy seized me, which obliged me to quit London, and consequently to renounce the bar. I lived some time at St. Alban's. After having suffered in that place long and extreme affliction, the storm was suddenly dispelled, and the same day-spring from on high which has arisen upon you, arose on me also. I spent eight years in the enjoyment of it; and have ever since the expiration of those eight years, been occasionally the prey of the same melancholy as at first. In the depths of it I wrote the Task, and the volume which preceded it; and in the same deeps am now translating Homer. But to return to Saint Alban's. I abode there a year and half. Thence I went to Cambridge, where I spent a short time with my brother, in whose neighbourhood I determined, if possible, to pass the remainder of my days. He soon found a lodging for me at Huntingdon. At that place I had not resided long, when I was led to an intimate connexion with a family of the name of Unwin. I soon quitted my lodging, and took up my abode with them. I had not lived long under their roof, when Mr. Unwin, as he was riding one Sunday morning to his cure at Gravely, was thrown from his horse; of which fall he died. Mrs. Unwin having the same views of the gospel as myself, and being desirous of attending a purer ministration of it than was to be found at Huntingdon, removed to Olney, where Mr. Newton was at that time the preacher, and I with her. There we continued till Mr. Newton, whose family was the only one in the place with which we could have a connexion, and with whom we lived always on

the most intimate terms, left it. After his departure, finding the situation no longer desirable, and our house threatening to fall upon our heads, we removed hither. Here we have a good house, in a most beautiful village, and, for the greatest part of the year, a most agreeable neighbourhood. Like you, madam, I stay much at home, and have not travelled twenty miles from this place and its environs, more than once these twenty years.

All this I have written, not for the singularity of the matter, as you will perceive, but partly for the reason which I gave at the outset, and partly that, seeing we are become correspondents, we may know as much of each other as we can, and that as soon as possible.

I beg, madam, that you will present my best respects to Mr. King, whom, together with yourself, should you at any time hereafter take wing for a longer flight than usual, we shall be happy to receive at Weston; and believe me, dear madam, his and your obliged and affectionate,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, March 12, 1788.

SLAVERY, and the Manners of the Great, I have read. The former I admired, as I do all that Miss More writes, as well for energy of expression as for the tendency of the design. I have never yet seen any production of her pen that has not recommended itself by both these qualifications. There is likewise

much good sense in her manner of treating every subject, and no mere poetic cant (which is the thing that I abhor,) in her manner of treating any. And this I say, not because you now know and visit her, but it has long been my avowed opinion of her works, which I have both spoken and written, as often as I have had occasion to mention them.

Mr. Wilberforce's little book (if he was the author of it) has also charmed me. It must, I should imagine, engage the notice of those to whom it is addressed. In that case one may say to them, either answer it, or be set down by it! They will do neither. They will approve, commend, and forget it. Such has been the fate of all exhortations to reform, whether in verse or prose, and however closely pressed upon the conscience, in all ages. Here and there a happy individual, to whom God gives grace and wisdom to profit by the admonition, is the better for it. But the aggregate body (as Gilbert Cooper used to call the multitude) remain, though with a very good understanding of the matter, like horse and mule that have none.

We shall now soon lose our neighbours at the Hall. We shall truly miss them, and long for their return. Mr. Throckmorton said to me last night, with sparkling eyes, and a face expressive of the highest pleasure —"We compared you this morning with Pope; we read your fourth Iliad and his, and I verily think we shall beat him. He has many superfluous lines, and does not interest one. When I read your translation, I am deeply affected. I see plainly your advantage, and am convinced that Pope spoiled all by attempting

the work in rhyme." His brother George, who is my most active amanuensis, and who indeed first introduced the subject, seconded all he said. More would have passed, but Mrs. Throckmorton having seated herself at the harpsichord, and for my amusement merely, my attention was of course turned to her. The new vicar of Olney is arrived, and we have exchanged visits. He is a plain, sensible man, and pleases me much. A treasure for Olney, if Olney can understand his value.

W. C.

TO GENERAL COWPER.

MY DEAR GENERAL, Weston, 1788.

A LETTER is not pleasant which excites curiosity, but does not gratify it. Such a letter was my last, the defects of which I therefore take the first opportunity to supply. When the condition of our negroes in the islands was first presented to me as a subject for songs, I felt myself not at all allured to the undertaking: it seemed to offer only images of horror, which could by no means be accommodated to the style of that sort of composition. But having a desire to comply, if possible, with the request made to me, after turning the matter in my mind as many ways as I could, I, at last, as I told you, produced three, and that which appears to myself the best of those three, I have sent you. Of the other two, one is serious,—in a strain of thought perhaps rather too serious, and I could not help it. The other, of which the slave-trader is himself the subject, is somewhat ludicrous. If I could

think them worth your seeing, I would, as opportunity should occur, send them also. If this amuses you, I shall be glad [1].

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 19, 1788.

THE spring is come, but not I suppose that spring which our poets have celebrated. So I judge at least by the extreme severity of the season, sunless skies and freezing blasts, surpassing all that we experienced in the depth of winter. How do you dispose of yourself in this howling month of March? As for me, I walk daily, be the weather what it may, take bark, and write verses. By the aid of such means as these, I combat the north-east wind with some measure of success, and look forward, with the hope of enjoying it, to the warmth of summer.

Have you seen a little volume lately published, entitled The Manners of the Great? It is said to have been written by Mr. Wilberforce, but whether actually written by him or not, is undoubtedly the work of some man intimately acquainted with the subject, a gentleman, and a man of letters. If it makes the impression on those to whom it is addressed, that may be in some degree expected from his arguments, and from his manner of pressing them, it will be well. But you and I have lived long enough in the world to know, that the hope of a general reformation in any

[1] "The Morning Dream" accompanied this letter.

class of men whatever, or of women either, may easily be too sanguine.

I have now given the last revisal to as much of my translation as was ready for it, and do not know that I shall bestow another single stroke of my pen on that part of it before I send it to the press. My business at present is with the sixteenth book, in which I have made some progress, but have not yet actually sent forth Patroclus to the battle. My first translation lies always before me; line by line I examine it as I proceed, and line by line reject it. I do not however hold myself altogether indebted to my critics for the better judgement that I seem to exercise in this matter now than in the first instance. By long study of him, I am in fact become much more familiar with Homer than at any time heretofore, and have possessed myself of such a taste of his manner, as is not to be attained by mere cursory reading for amusement. But alas! it is after all a mortifying consideration, that the majority of my judges hereafter will be no judges of this. *Græcum est, non potest legi*, is a motto that would suit nine in ten of those who will give themselves airs about it, and pretend to like or to dislike. No matter. I know I shall please *you*, because I know *what* pleases you, and am sure that I have done it.

Adieu! my good friend,

Ever affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, March 29, 1788.

I REJOICE that you have so successfully performed so long a journey without the aid of hoofs or wheels. I do not know that a journey on foot exposes a man to more disasters than a carriage or a horse; perhaps it may be the safer way of travelling, but the novelty of it impressed me with some anxiety on your account.

It seems almost incredible to myself that my company should be at all desirable to you, or to any man. I know so little of the world as it goes at present, and labour generally under such a depression of spirits, especially at those times when I could wish to be most cheerful, that my own share in every conversation appears to me to be the most insipid thing imaginable. But you say you found it otherwise, and I will not for my own sake doubt your sincerity: *de gustibus non est disputandum*, and since such is yours, I shall leave you in quiet possession of it, wishing indeed both its continuance and increase. I shall not find a properer place in which to say, accept of Mrs. Unwin's acknowledgements, as well as mine, for the kindness of your expressions on this subject, and be assured of an undissembling welcome at all times, when it shall suit you to give us your company at Weston. As to her, she is one of the sincerest of the human race, and if she receives you with the appearance of pleasure, it is because she feels it. Her behaviour on such occasions is with her an affair of conscience, and she dares no more look a falsehood than utter one.

It is almost time to tell you that I have received the books safe, they have not suffered the least detriment by the way, and I am much obliged to you for them. If my translation should be a little delayed in consequence of this favour of yours, you must take the blame on yourself. It is impossible not to read the notes of a commentator so learned, so judicious, and of so fine a taste as Dr. Clarke, having him at one's elbow. Though he has been but a few hours under my roof, I have already peeped at him, and find that he will be *instar omnium* to me. They are such notes exactly as I wanted. A translator of Homer should ever have somebody at hand to say, "that's a beauty," lest he should slumber where his author does not; not only depreciating, by such inadvertency, the work of his original, but depriving perhaps his own of an embellishment which wanted only to be noticed.

If you hear ballads sung in the streets on the hardships of the negroes in the islands, they are probably mine. It must be an honour to any man to have given a stroke to that chain, however feeble. I fear, however, that the attempt will fail. The tidings which have lately reached me from London concerning it, are not the most encouraging. While the matter slept, or was but slightly adverted to, the English only had their share of shame in common with other nations on account of it. But since it has been canvassed and searched to the bottom,—since the public attention has been riveted to the horrible scheme,—we can no longer plead either that we did not know it, or did not think

of it. Wo be to us, if we refuse the poor captives the redress to which they have so clear a right, and prove ourselves in the sight of God and men indifferent to all considerations but those of gain.

Adieu,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, March 31, 1788.

MRS. THROCKMORTON has promised to write to me. I beg that as often as you shall see her you will give her a smart pinch, and say, "Have you written to my cousin?" I build all my hopes of her performance on this expedient, and for so doing these my letters, not patent, shall be your sufficient warrant. You are thus to give her the question till she shall answer, "Yes."

I have written one more song, and sent it. It is called the Morning Dream, and may be sung to the tune of Tweed-Side, or any other tune that will suit it, for I am not nice on that subject. I would have copied it for you, had I not almost filled my sheet without it, but now, my dear, you must stay till the sweet sirens of London shall bring it to you, or if that happy day should never arrive, I hereby acknowledge myself your debtor to that amount. I shall now probably cease to sing of tortured negroes, a theme which never pleased me, but which, in the hope of doing them some little service, I was not unwilling to handle.

If any thing could have raised Miss More to a higher place in my opinion than she possessed before, it could only be your information that, after all, she,

and not Mr. Wilberforce, is author of that volume. How comes it to pass, that she, being a woman, writes with a force, and energy, and a correctness hitherto arrogated by the men, and not very frequently displayed even by the men themselves!

Adieu,

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.

DEAR MADAM, Weston Underwood, April 11, 1788.

THE melancholy that I have mentioned, and concerning which you are so kind as to inquire, is of a kind, so far as I know, peculiar to myself. It does not at all affect the operations of my mind on any subject to which I can attach it, whether serious or ludicrous, or whatsoever it may be; for which reason I am almost always employed either in reading or writing, when I am not engaged in conversation. A vacant hour is my abhorrence; because, when I am not occupied, I suffer under the whole influence of my unhappy temperament. I thank you for your recommendation of a medicine from which you have received benefit yourself; but there is hardly any thing that I have not proved, however beneficial it may have been found by others, in my own case utterly useless. I have, therefore, long since bid adieu to all hope from human means,—the means excepted of perpetual employment.

I will not say that we shall never meet, because it is not for a creature who knows not what shall be to-morrow, to assert any thing positively concerning

the future. Things more unlikely I have yet seen brought to pass, and things which, if I had expressed my opinion of them at all, I should have said were impossible. But being respectively circumstanced as we are, there seems no present probability of it. You speak of insuperable hinderances; and I also have hinderances that would be equally difficult to surmount. One is, that I never ride, that I am not able to perform a journey on foot, and that chaises do not roll within the sphere of that economy which my circumstances oblige me to observe. If this were not of itself sufficient to excuse me, when I decline so obliging an invitation as yours, I could mention yet other obstacles. But to what end? One impracticability makes as effectual a barrier as a thousand. It will be otherwise in other worlds. Either we shall not bear about us a body, or it will be more easily transportable than this. In the mean time, by the help of the post, strangers to each other may cease to be such, as you and I have already begun to experience.

It is indeed, madam, as you say, a foolish world, and likely to continue such till the Great Teacher shall himself vouchsafe to make it wiser. I am persuaded that time alone will never mend it. But there is doubtless a day appointed when there shall be a more general manifestation of the beauty of holiness than mankind have ever yet beheld. When that period shall arrive, there will be an end of profane representations, whether of heaven or hell, on the stage;—the great realities will supersede them.

I have just discovered that I have written to you on

paper so transparent, that it will hardly keep the contents a secret. Excuse the mistake, and believe me, dear madam, with my respects to Mr. King,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 19, 1788.

I THANK you for your last, and for the verses in particular, therein contained; in which there is not only rhime but reason. And yet I fear that neither you nor I, with all our reasoning and rhiming, shall effect much good in this matter. So far as I can learn, and I have had intelligence from a quarter within the reach of such as is respectable, our governors are not animated altogether with such heroic ardour as the occasion might inspire. They consult frequently, indeed, in the cabinet about it; but the frequency of their consultations, in a case so plain as this would be, (did not what Shakespeare calls commodity, and what we call political expediency, cast a cloud over it,) rather bespeaks a desire to save appearances, than to interpose to purpose. Laws will, I suppose, be enacted for the more humane treatment of the negroes; but who shall see to the execution of them? The planters will not, and the negroes cannot. In fact we know, that laws of this tendency have not been wanting, enacted even amongst themselves; but there has been always a want of prosecutors, or righteous judges; deficiencies, which will not be very easily supplied. The news-

papers have lately told us, that these merciful masters have, on this occasion, been occupied in passing ordonnances, by which the lives and limbs of their slaves are to be secured from wanton cruelty hereafter. But who does not immediately detect the artifice, or can give them a moment's credit for any thing more than a design, by this show of lenity, to avert the storm which they think hangs over them? On the whole, I fear there is reason to wish, for the honour of England, that the nuisance had never been troubled; lest we eventually make ourselves justly chargeable with the whole offence by not removing it. The enormity cannot be palliated; we can no longer plead that we were not aware of it, or that our attention was otherwise engaged; and shall be inexcusable, therefore, ourselves, if we leave the least part of it unredressed. Such arguments as Pharaoh might have used to justify his destruction of the Israelites, substituting only sugar for bricks, may lie ready for our use also; but I think we can find no better.

The vicarage at Olney begins once more to assume a comfortable aspect. Our new neighbours there are of a character exactly suited to our wish, conversible, peaceable, amiable. We drank tea there yesterday; the first opportunity we have had of doing so; they, having waived all unnecessary ceremonials, drank tea with us the day before. I had made several calls on them at noon, and Mr. Bean several here in the evening; but dirty ways, high winds, rain, or snow had always interposed to prevent a meeting between the ladies. Mr. Bean has made a notable journey to Oxford, in company with Thomas Bull. It is hardly

fair to anticipate him in the account which he will doubtless give you of it himself, neither have I room to say much about it. I will only just mention, that having but one horse between them, they availed themselves of him in every possible way. Mr. Bean having walked till he could walk no longer, mounted behind, but finding himself incommoded in the straddle that the horse's hips required, changed places with Mr. Bull; he thenceforth rode behind, in the side-saddle fashion, with both legs on a side, and thus they proceeded till they came near to Oxford.

We are tolerably well, and shall rejoice to hear that, as the year rises, Mrs. Newton's health keeps pace with it. We expect Mr. and Mrs. Powley soon, but take it for granted, as they are gone first to Laytonstone, that him, at least, you will see before we shall see him. Accept our best love to your whole trio, and believe me, my dear friend,

Affectionately and truly yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston Lodge, May 1, 1788.

MY DEAREST CUZZY-WUZZY,

BEHOLD the pill new made and the dose more brightly gilded! May the patient be much the better for it, and the apothecary and nurse well paid! Then you and I shall have no cause to complain.

I have lately sent you nothing but scraps instead of letters, but I shall soon grow more prolix, having more to communicate than the time will at this present

writing allow. Mrs. Frog told you indeed the truth. I have had a letter from her, the brevity of which was the only cause of complaint with which it furnished me; though even of that I made no complaint in my answer to it, having too much Christian consideration of her various and multifarious engagements to be so unreasonable. They have been now a month in London, and if she and Mr. Frog are men of their word, another month brings them back again.

I told you that I admire Mrs. Maitland's Muse, and I told you the truth; she has no need to fear a critical eye, an eye at least that is truly such. There are several very beautiful turns of expression and versification in the copy, and the whole is good. Perhaps instead of *gay Hope* (an epithet that does not seem exactly to suit a hope of the religious kind) I should substitute some other term; and I know not that my fault-finding faculty discovers any other speck to lay its finger on.

To copy my verses enclosed, and to scribble this morsel, is all that I am able to do before breakfast. Give my love and thanks to Mrs. Maitland when you write to her, and trust me, my dearest coz, that with ardent wishes to see thee in the beautiful scenes with which I am here surrounded, I am ever thine,

WM. COWPER.

Mrs. Unwin's love attends you.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, May 6, 1788.

You ask me how I like Smollett's Don Quixote? I answer, well,—perhaps better than any body's: but having no skill in the original, some diffidence becomes me. That is to say, I do not know whether I *ought* to prefer it or not. Yet there is so little deviation from other versions of it which I have seen, that I do not much hesitate. It has made me laugh I know immoderately, and in such a case *ça suffit*.

A thousand thanks, my dear, for the new convenience in the way of stowage which you are so kind as to intend me. There is nothing in which I am so deficient as repositories for letters, papers, and litter of all sorts. Your last present has helped me somewhat; but not with respect to such things as require lock and key, which are numerous. A box therefore so secured will be to me an invaluable acquisition. And since you leave me to my option, what shall be the size thereof, I of course prefer a folio. On the back of the book-seeming box some artist, expert in those matters, may inscribe these words,

Collectanea curiosa.

The English of which is, a collection of curiosities. A title which I prefer to all others, because if I live, I shall take care that the box shall merit it; and because it will operate as an incentive to open that, which being locked cannot be opened. For in these cases the greater the balk, the more wit is discovered by the ingenious contriver of it, viz. myself.

The General, I understand by his last letter, is in town. In my last to him, I told him news; possibly it will give you pleasure, and ought for that reason to be made known to you as soon as possible. My friend Rowley, who I told you has, after twenty-five years' silence, renewed his correspondence with me, and who now lives in Ireland, where he has many and considerable connexions, has sent to me for thirty subscription papers. Rowley is one of the most benevolent and friendly creatures in the world, and will, I dare say, do all in his power to serve me.

I am just recovered from a violent cold, attended by a cough, which split my head while it lasted. I escaped these tortures all the winter, but whose constitution, or what skin, can possibly be proof against our vernal breezes in England? Mine never were, nor will be.

When people are intimate, we say they are as great as two inkle-weavers, on which expression I have to remark in the first place, that the word *great* is here used in a sense which the corresponding term has not, so far as I know, in any other language,—and secondly, that inkle-weavers contract intimacies with each other sooner than other people, on account of their juxtaposition in weaving of inkle. Hence it is that Mr. Gregson and I emulate those happy weavers in the closeness of our connexion. We live near to each other, and while the Hall is empty are each other's only extraforaneous comfort,

Most truly thine,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Weston, May 8, 1788.

ALAS! my library!—I must now give it up for a lost thing for ever. The only consolation belonging to the circumstance is, or seems to be, that no such loss did ever befall any other man, or can ever befall me again. As far as books are concerned I am

Totus teres atque rotundus,

and may set fortune at defiance. The books which had been my father's had most of them his arms on the inside cover, but the rest no mark, neither his name nor mine. I could mourn for them like Sancho for his Dapple, but it would avail me nothing.

You will oblige me much by sending me Crazy Kate. A gentleman last winter promised me both her and the Lace-maker, but he went to London, that place in which, as in the grave, "all things are forgotten," and I have never seen either of them.

I begin to find some prospect of a conclusion, of the Iliad at least, now opening upon me, having reached the eighteenth book. Your letter found me yesterday in the very fact of dispersing the whole host of Troy by the voice only of Achilles. There is nothing extravagant in the idea, for you have witnessed a similar effect attending even such a voice as mine at midnight, from a garret window, on the dogs of a whole parish, whom I have put to flight in a moment.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 12, 1788.

It is probable, my dearest coz, that I shall not be able to write much, but as much as I can I will. The time between rising and breakfast is all that I can at present find, and this morning I lay longer than usual.

In the style of the lady's note to you I can easily perceive a smatch of her character. Neither men nor women write with such neatness of expression, who have not given a good deal of attention to language, and qualified themselves by study. At the same time it gave me much more pleasure to observe that my coz, though not standing on the pinnacle of renown quite so elevated as that which lifts Mrs. Montagu to the clouds, falls in no degree short of her in this particular; so that should she make you a member of her academy, she will do it honour. Suspect me not of flattering you, for I abhor the thought; neither *will* you suspect it. Recollect that it is an invariable rule with me, never to pay compliments to those I love.

Two days, *en suite*, I have walked to Gayhurst; a longer journey than I have walked on foot these seventeen years. The first day I went alone, designing merely to make the experiment, and choosing to be at liberty to return at whatsoever point of my pilgrimage I should find myself fatigued. For I was not without suspicion that years, and some other things no less injurious than years, viz. melancholy and distress of mind, might by this time have unfitted me for such achievements. But I found it otherwise. I reached the church, which stands, as you know, in the garden,

in fifty-five minutes, and returned in ditto time to Weston. The next day I took the same walk with Mr. Powley, having a desire to show him the prettiest place in the country. I not only performed these two excursions without injury to my health, but have by means of them gained indisputable proof that my ambulatory faculty is not yet impaired; a discovery which, considering that to my feet alone I am likely, as I have ever been, to be indebted always for my transportation from place to place, I find very delectable.

You will find in the Gentleman's Magazine a sonnet, addressed to Henry Cowper, signed T. H. I am the writer of it. No creature knows this but yourself; you will make what use of the intelligence you shall see good.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 19, 1788.

TRUE, as you say, my coz, praise not sounded forth is lost, and the subject of it not at all advantaged. But the question is, shall we publish our eulogium on Mrs. Montagu in a newspaper or in the Gentleman's Magazine? Let us consider the matter; a newspaper perhaps has more readers than Mr. Urban, yet Mr. Urban has many, and a majority of them are literary men. No single newspaper possibly is read by so many of the literati as the publications of Mr. Urban, —not to mention that he is perused by multitudes of blockheads besides. Again, a newspaper dies with

the day, and its contents in general die with it. Not so the Gentleman's Magazine. There are multitudes who perpetuate the long series of his labours, who deliver them down to posterity; one generation consigns them over to another, and they are consequently immortal. For these reasons, therefore, I deem a compliment paid in a magazine twice as good as the same compliment would be, paid in a newspaper; especially considering that there is at least a chance that some daily paper may enrich itself with a copy of said compliment, stealing it from the Magazine, a practice not unfrequent. Thus far I have considered only Mrs. Montagu's interest in the affair; but I do not mean altogether to overlook my own concern in it. One good turn deserves another: Mr. Urban was not sparing either of his labours or his commendations in giving an account of the Task. On the contrary, he has bestowed on it a larger portion of both than any of his brother reviewers. I account myself, therefore, in some sort bound to give him now and then a proof that I am not insensible of the obligation, by sending him such scraps as the more weighty business of translating Homer will permit me to produce.

All these reasons maturely weighed, a decision seems to result from them in favour of the Magazine. But after all, I refer the whole to your arbitration. If in your next you should tell me that you are of my mind, I will transmit a copy immediately to Mr. Nichols, informing him at the same time that they are by the author of the Task. Shouldst thou differ from me, thou wilt then do well to send them thyself to any newspaper which thou approvest most.

It is generally a rule with me in writing to you, to forget what is most important. Accordingly, I forgot to tell you of Lord Cowper's kindness. I was not aware of my obligations to Henry; neither did I at all suspect that he had given his Lordship a jog on the occasion. Of course, when I answered his letter, I made him no acknowledgement on that behalf. I therefore entreat thee to be proxy for me, and when you see him next, to thank him heartily on my part for his friendly and seasonable intercession.

I also forgot to tell thee, that in a squabble that has fallen out between Maurice Smith and Mrs. Marriot of the Swan, concerning the post office, viz. who should have the management of it, the new plan of a daily post has dropped to the ground, and we now have our letters only three times in the week, as usual.

I beg that you will give my love to Mrs. Frog, and tell her it is time she were gone to Bucklands. According to my reckoning, which I know to be very exact, she has already stayed her allotted time in London, where if she still continues frisking about, heedless how time goes, and is after all to take a frisk to Bucklands also, I shall be glad to know when we are likely to see her at the Hall again? It is true that northernly winds have blown ever since she left us, but they have not prevented the most exuberant show of blossoms that ever was seen, nor the singing of nightingales in every hedge. Ah, my cousin, thou hast lost all these luxuries too, but not by choice, thine is an absence of necessity. The Wilderness is now in all its beauty: I would that thou wert here to enjoy it. Our guests

leave us to-morrow. Fare thee well. Thanks for the two lists of subscribers, and for Mr. Vickery's most admirable puff.

Yours, my dearest, ever,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May 24, 1788.

FOR two excellent prints I return you my sincere acknowledgments. I cannot say that poor Kate resembles much the original, who was neither so young nor so handsome as the pencil has represented her; but she was a figure well suited to the account given of her in the Task, and has a face exceedingly expressive of despairing melancholy. The lace-maker is accidentally a good likeness of a young woman, once our neighbour, who was hardly less handsome than the picture twenty years ago; but the loss of one husband, and the acquisition of another, have since that time impaired her much; yet she might still be supposed to have sat to the artist.

We dined yesterday with your friend and mine, the most companionable and domestic Mr. C——. The whole kingdom can hardly furnish a spectacle more pleasing to a man who has a taste for true happiness, than himself, Mrs. C——, and their multitudinous family. Seven long miles are interposed between us, or perhaps I should oftener have an opportunity of declaiming on this subject.

I am now in the nineteenth book of the Iliad, and on the point of displaying such feats of heroism per-

formed by Achilles, as make all other achievements trivial. I may well exclaim, O! for a muse of fire! especially having not only a great host to cope with, but a great river also; much however may be done, when Homer leads the way. I should not have chosen to have been the original author of such a business, even though all the nine had stood at my elbow. Time has wonderful effects. We admire that in an ancient, for which we should send a modern bard to Bedlam.

I saw at Mr. C——'s a great curiosity; an antique bust of Paris in Parian marble. You will conclude that it interested me exceedingly. I pleased myself with supposing that it once stood in Helen's chamber. It was in fact brought from the Levant, and though not well mended (for it had suffered much by time) is an admirable performance.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May 25, 1788.

Ask possibilities, and they shall be performed; but ask not hymns from a man suffering by despair as I do. I could not sing the Lord's song were it to save my life, banished as I am, not to a strange land, but to a remoteness from his presence, in comparison with which the distance from east to west is no distance,—is vicinity and cohesion. I dare not, either in prose or verse, allow myself to express a frame of mind which I am conscious does not belong to me; least of all can I venture to use the language of absolute resignation,

lest only counterfeiting, I should for that very reason be taken strictly at my word, and lose all my remaining comfort. Can there not be found among those translations of Madame Guyon, somewhat that might serve the purpose? I should think there might. Submission to the will of Christ, my memory tells me, is a theme that pervades them all. If so, your request is performed already; and if any alteration in them should be necessary, I will with all my heart make it. I have no objection to giving the graces of the foreigner an English dress, but insuperable ones to all false pretences and affected exhibitions of what I do not feel.

Hoping that you will have the grace to be resigned most perfectly to this disappointment, which you should not have suffered, had it been in my power to prevent it, I remain, with our best remembrances to Mr. Thornton,

Ever affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAR COZ, The Lodge, May 27, 1788.

THE General, in a letter which came yesterday, sent me enclosed a copy of my sonnet; thus introducing it.

"I send a copy of verses somebody has written in the Gentleman's Magazine for April last. Independent of my partiality towards the subject, I think the lines themselves are good."

Thus it appears that my poetical adventure has succeeded to my wish, and I write to him by this post,

on purpose to inform him that the somebody in question is myself.

I no longer wonder that Mrs. Montagu stands at the head of all that is called learned, and that every critic veils his bonnet to her superior judgement. I am now reading, and have reached the middle of her Essay on the Genius of Shakespeare, a book of which, strange as it may seem, though I must have read it formerly, I had absolutely forgot the existence.

The learning, the good sense, the sound judgement, and the wit displayed in it, fully justify not only my compliment, but all compliments that either have been already paid to her talents, or shall be paid hereafter. Voltaire, I doubt not, rejoiced that his antagonist wrote in English, and that his countrymen could not possibly be judges of the dispute. Could they have known how much she was in the right, and by how many thousand miles the bard of Avon is superior to all their dramatists, the French critic would have lost half his fame among them.

I saw at Mr. C——'s a head of Paris; an antique of Parian marble. His uncle, who left him the estate, brought it, as I understand, from the Levant: you may suppose I viewed it with all the enthusiasm that belongs to a translator of Homer. It is in reality a great curiosity, and highly valuable.

Our friend Sephus has sent me two prints, the Lace-maker and Crazy Kate. These also I have contemplated with pleasure, having, as you know, a particular interest in them. The former of them is not more beautiful than a lace-maker, once our neighbour at Olney; though the artist has assembled as many charms

in her countenance as I ever saw in any countenance, one excepted. Kate is both younger and handsomer than the original from which I drew, but she is in a good style, and as mad as need be.

How does this hot weather suit thee, my dear, in London? As for me, with all my colonnades and bowers, I am quite oppressed by it.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, June 3, 1788.

THE excessive heat of these last few days was indeed oppressive; but excepting the languor that it occasioned both in my mind and body, it was far from being prejudicial to me. It opened ten thousand pores, by which as many mischiefs, the effects of long obstruction, began to breathe themselves forth abundantly. Then came an east wind, baneful to me at all times, but following so closely such a sultry season, uncommonly noxious. To speak in the seaman's phrase, not entirely strange to you, *I was taken all aback;* and the humours which would have escaped, if old Eurus would have given them leave, finding every door shut, have fallen into my eyes. But in a country like this, poor miserable mortals must be content to suffer all that sudden and violent changes can inflict; and if they are quit for about half the plagues that Caliban calls down on Prospero, they may say we are well off, and dance for joy, if the rheumatism or cramp will let them.

Did you ever see an advertisement by one Fowle, a

dancing-master of Newport Pagnel? If not, I will contrive to send it to you for your amusement. It is the most extravagantly ludicrous affair of the kind I ever saw. The author of it had the good hap to be crazed, or he had never produced any thing half so clever; for you will ever observe, that they who are said to have lost their wits, have more than other people. It is therefore only a slander, with which envy prompts the malignity of persons in their senses to asperse wittier than themselves. But there are countries in the world, where the mad have justice done them, where they are revered as the subjects of inspiration, and consulted as oracles. Poor Fowle would have made a figure there.

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, June 8, 1788.

YOUR letter brought me the very first intelligence of the event it mentions. My last letter from Lady Hesketh gave me reason enough to expect it, but the certainty of it was unknown to me till I learned it by your information. If gradual decline, the consequence of great age, be a sufficient preparation of the mind to encounter such a loss, our minds were certainly prepared to meet it: yet to you I need not say that no preparation can supersede the feelings of the heart on such occasions. While our friends yet live inhabitants of the same world with ourselves, they seem still to live to *us;* we are sure that they sometimes think of us; and however improbable it may seem, it

is never impossible that we may see each other once again. But the grave, like a great gulf, swallows all such expectation, and in the moment when a beloved friend sinks into it, a thousand tender recollections awaken a regret, that will be felt in spite of all reasonings, and let our warnings have been what they may. Thus it is I take my last leave of poor Ashley, whose heart towards me was ever truly parental, and to whose memory I owe a tenderness and respect that will never leave me.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR WALTER, Weston, June 17, 1788.

You think me, no doubt, a tardy correspondent, and such I am, but not willingly. Many hinderances have intervened, and the most difficult to surmount have been those which the east and north-east winds have occasioned, breathing winter upon the roses of June, and inflaming my eyes, ten times more sensible of the inconvenience than they. The vegetables of England seem, like our animals, of a hardier and bolder nature than those of other countries. In France and Italy flowers blow, because it is warm, but here, in spite of the cold. The season however is somewhat mended at present, and my eyes with it. Finding myself this morning in perfect ease of body, I seize the welcome opportunity to do something at least towards the discharge of my arrears to you.

I am glad that you liked my song, and, if I liked the others myself so well as that I sent you, I would

transcribe for you them also. But I sent *that*, because I accounted it the best. Slavery, and especially negro slavery, because the cruelest, is an odious and disgusting subject. Twice or thrice I have been assailed with entreaties to write a poem on that theme. But besides that it would be in some sort treason against Homer to abandon him for other matter, I felt myself so much hurt in my spirits the moment I entered on the contemplation of it, that I have at last determined absolutely to have nothing more to do with it. There are some scenes of horror, on which my imagination can dwell, not without some complacence. But then they are such scenes as God, not man, produces. In earthquakes, high winds, tempestuous seas, there is the grand as well as the terrible. But when man is active to disturb, there is such meanness in the design, and such cruelty in the execution, that I both hate and despise the whole operation, and feel it a degradation of poetry to employ her in the description of it. I hope also that the generality of my countrymen have more generosity in their nature than to want the fiddle of verse to go before them in the performance of an act to which they are invited by the loudest calls of humanity.

Breakfast calls, and then Homer.

Ever yours,

W. C.

Erratum.—Instead of Mr. Wilberforce as author of Manners of the Great, read Hannah More.

My paper mourns, and my seal. It is for the death of a venerable uncle, Ashley Cowper, at the age of eighty-seven.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, Weston Underwood, June 19, 1788.

YOU must think me a tardy correspondent, unless you have had charity enough for me to suppose that I have met with other hinderances than those of indolence and inattention. With these I cannot charge myself, for I am never idle by choice; and inattentive to you I certainly have not been; but, on the contrary, can safely affirm that every day I have thought on you. My silence has been occasioned by a malady to which I have all my life been subject—an inflammation of the eyes. The last sudden change of weather, from excessive heat to a wintry degree of cold, occasioned it, and at the same time gave me a pinch of the rheumatic kind; from both which disorders I have but just recovered. I do not suppose that our climate has been much altered since the days of our forefathers, the Picts; but certainly the human constitution in this country has been altered much. Inured as we are from our cradles to every vicissitude in a climate more various than any other, and in possession of all that modern refinement has been able to contrive for our security, we are yet as subject to blights as the tenderest blossoms of spring; and are so well admonished of every change in the atmosphere by our bodily feelings, as hardly to have any need of a weather-glass to mark them. For this we are, no doubt, indebted to the multitude of our accommodations; for it was not possible to retain the hardiness that originally belonged to our race, under the delicate management to which for many ages we have now

been accustomed. I can hardly doubt that a bull-dog or a game-cock might be made just as susceptible of injuries from weather as myself, were he dieted and in all respects accommodated as I am. Or if the project did not succeed in the first instance (for we ourselves did not become what we are at once), in process of time, however, and in a course of many generations it would certainly take effect. Let such a dog be fed in his infancy with pap, Naples biscuit, and boiled chicken; let him be wrapped in flannel at night, sleep on a good feather-bed, and ride out in a coach for an airing; and if his posterity do not become slight-limbed, puny, and valetudinarian, it will be a wonder. Thus our parents, and their parents, and the parents of both were managed; and thus ourselves; and the consequence is, that instead of being weather-proof, even without clothing, furs and flannels are not warm enough to defend us. It is observable, however, that though we have by these means lost much of our pristine vigour, our days are not the fewer. We live as long as those whom, on account of the sturdiness of their frame, the poets supposed to have been the progeny of oaks. Perhaps too they had little feeling, and for that reason also might be imagined to be so descended: for a very robust athletic habit seems inconsistent with much sensibility. But sensibility is the *sine quâ non* of real happiness. If, therefore, our lives have not been shortened, and if our feelings have been rendered more exquisite as our habit of body has become more delicate, on the whole, perhaps, we have no cause to complain, but are rather gainers by our degeneracy.

Do you consider what you do, when you ask one

poet his opinion of another? Yet I think I can give you an honest answer to your question, and without the least wish to nibble. Thomson was admirable in description; but it always seemed to me that there was somewhat of affectation in his style, and that his numbers are sometimes not well harmonized. I could wish too, with Dr. Johnson, that he had confined himself to this country; for when he describes what he never saw, one is forced to read him with some allowance for possible misrepresentation. He was, however, a true poet, and his lasting fame has proved it. Believe me, my dear madam, with my best respects to Mr. King, most truly yours,

W. C.

P. S. I am extremely sorry that you have been so much indisposed, and hope that your next will bring me a more favourable account of your health. I know not why, but I rather suspect that you do not allow yourself sufficient air and exercise. The physicians call them non-naturals, I suppose to deter their patients from the use of them.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, June 23, 1785.

WHEN I tell you that an unanswered letter troubles my conscience in some degree like a crime, you will think me endued with most heroic patience, who have so long submitted to that trouble on account of yours not answered yet. But the truth is, that I have been

much engaged. Homer (you know) affords me constant employment; besides which I have rather what may be called, considering the privacy in which I have long lived, a numerous correspondence: to one of my friends in particular, a near and much-loved relation, I write weekly, and sometimes twice in the week; nor are these my only excuses; the sudden changes of the weather have much affected me, and especially with a disorder most unfavourable to letter-writing, an inflammation in my eyes. With all these apologies I approach you once more, not altogether despairing of forgiveness.

It has pleased God to give us rain, without which this part of our country at least must soon have become a desert. The meadows have been parched to a January brown, and we have foddered our cattle for some time, as in the winter. The goodness and power of God are never (I believe) so universally acknowledged as at the end of a long drought. Man is naturally a self-sufficient animal, and in all concerns that seem to lie within the sphere of his own ability, thinks little or not at all of the need he always has of protection and furtherance from above. But he is sensible that the clouds will not assemble at his bidding, and that, though the clouds assemble, they will not fall in showers because he commands them. When therefore at last the blessing descends, you shall hear even in the streets the most irreligious and thoughtless with one voice exclaim—"Thank God!"—confessing themselves indebted to his favour, and willing, at least so far as words go, to give him the glory. I can hardly doubt therefore that the earth is sometimes parched,

and the crops endangered, in order that the multitude may not want a memento to whom they owe them, nor absolutely forget the power on which all depend for all things.

Our solitary part of the year is over. Mrs. Unwin's daughter and son-in-law have lately spent some time with us. We shall shortly receive from London our old friends the Newtons (he was once minister of Olney); and, when they leave us, we expect that Lady Hesketh will succeed them, perhaps to spend the summer here, and possibly the winter also. The summer indeed is leaving us at a rapid rate, as do all the seasons, and though I have marked their flight so often, I know not which is the swiftest. Man is never so deluded as when he dreams of his own duration. The answer of the old patriarch to Pharaoh may be adopted by every man at the close of the longest life—"Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage." Whether we look back from fifty, or from twice fifty, the past appears equally a dream; and we can only be said truly to have lived, while we have been profitably employed. Alas, then! making the necessary deductions, how short is life! Were men in general to save themselves all the steps they take to no purpose, or to a bad one, what numbers, who are now active, would become sedentary!

Thus I have sermonized through my paper. Living where you live, you can bear with me the better. I always follow the leading of my unconstrained thoughts, when I write to a friend, be they grave or otherwise. Homer reminds me of you every day. I am now in the twenty-first Iliad. Adieu,

W C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, June 27, 1788.

FOR the sake of a longer visit, my dearest coz, I can be well content to wait. The country, this country at least, is pleasant at all times, and when winter is come, or near at hand, we shall have the better chance for being snug. I know your passion for retirement indeed, or for what we call *deedy* retirement, and the F——s intending to return to Bath with their mother, when her visit at the Hall is over, you will then find here exactly the retirement in question. I have made in the orchard the best winter-walk in all the parish, sheltered from the east, and from the north-east, and open to the sun, except at his rising, all the day. Then we will have Homer and Don Quixote: and then we will have saunter and chat, and one laugh more before we die. Our orchard is alive with creatures of all kinds; poultry of every denomination swarms in it, and pigs, the drollest in the world!

I rejoice that we have a cousin Charles also, as well as a cousin Henry, who has had the address to win the good-likings of the Chancellor. May he fare the better for it! As to myself, I have long since ceased to have any expectations from that quarter. Yet if he were indeed mortified as you say (and no doubt you have particular reasons for thinking so,) and repented to that degree of his hasty exertions in favour of the present occupant, who can tell? he wants neither means nor management, but can easily at some future period redress the evil, if he chooses to do it. But in the mean time life steals away, and shortly neither he

will be in circumstances to do me a kindness, nor I to receive one at his hands. Let him make haste therefore, or he will die a promise in my debt, which he will never be able to perform. Your communications on this subject are as safe as you can wish them. We divulge nothing but what might appear in the magazine, nor that without great consideration.

I must tell you a feat of my dog Beau. Walking by the river side, I observed some water-lilies floating at a little distance from the bank. They are a large white flower, with an orange coloured eye, very beautiful. I had a desire to gather one, and, having your long cane in my hand, by the help of it endeavoured to bring one of them within my reach. But the attempt proved vain, and I walked forward. Beau had all the while observed me very attentively. Returning soon after toward the same place, I observed him plunge into the river, while I was about forty yards distant from him; and, when I had nearly reached the spot, he swam to land with a lily in his mouth, which he came and laid at my foot.

Mr. Rose, whom I have mentioned to you as a visitor of mine for the first time soon after you left us, writes me word that he has seen my ballads against the slave-mongers, but not in print. Where he met with them, I know not. Mr. Bull begged hard for leave to print them at Newport-Pagnel, and I refused, thinking that it would be wrong to anticipate the nobility, gentry, and others, at whose pressing instance I composed them, in their design to print them. But perhaps I need not have been so squeamish; for the opportunity to publish them in London seems now not only ripe,

but rotten. I am well content. There is but one of them with which I am myself satisfied, though I have heard them all well spoken of. But there are very few things of my own composition, that I can endure to read, when they have been written a month, though at first they seem to me to be all perfection.

Mrs. Unwin, who has been much the happier since the time of your return hither has been in some sort settled, begs me to make her kindest remembrance.

Yours, my dear, most truly,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, July 5, 1788.

NOT *emetic tartar*, my coz, but the *soluble salt of tartar*, has been of such sovereign use to me, I have not ceased to take it since the time when Dr. Ash prescribed it, and believe myself indebted to it in a great degree for the measure of health that I have enjoyed. But with all its virtues, it has not superseded the necessity of now and then (once or twice in a year perhaps) a dose of its namesake the emetic. My stomach is much improved since the last operation, and yet is in all respects a troublesome, and in one a very singular stomach. For you must know, my dear, to carry on the *Johnsonianism* a little farther, that take what I will of the emetic kind, I could not absolutely swear when the operation is over, that I have spuked at all. The only effect of it seems to be, that it disturbs certain air-bubbles contained in the *organ of digestion, which,* as they escape out of the said organ through

the gullet or throat, bring with them a part of what I wish to be rid of. But your true roaring vomit, that pumps up the very dregs from the bottom, is an exploit to which I am by no means equal. Accordingly much is left where it was.

I have seen no more of Mrs. Piozzi's Letters than the Magazine and Review have afforded. If I remember right, the letters of Johnson pleased me chiefly on this account, that though on all other occasions he wrote like nobody, in his letters he expresses himself somewhat in the style of other folks. For I hate triplets in prose, and can hardly think even his good sense a sufficient counterpoise for his affectation. I admire your new way to pay off old scores, and to save yourself from the Royal Durance, alias the King's Bench, by printing my letters. You have my free permission to do it, but not till I am dead. No, nor even then, till you have given them a complete revisal, erasing all that the critics in such matters would condemn. In which case, my dear, thou wilt reduce thy noble to nine pence, and must take thy seat in a gaol at last.

I shall be as happy in the arrival of my Solander as he whose name it bears, was to arrive once more in England after his circumnavigation. To be the proprietor of any thing that was once my uncle's will make me rich. A mere trifle acquires value by having been the property of such a man; but his watch will be a vade mecum with which I shall hold a thousand conversations when I am in the woods alone; nor will his snuff-box fall a whit short of it, as a most desirable companion. The love I bore him, and the honour I

have for his memory, will make them both inestimable to me. The box therefore charged with these treasures will, both for its own sake and for the sake of its contents, be an addition not to my convenience only, but likewise to my real comfort;—not forgetting the Dean's toothpick. For the Dean also was justly one of the principal boasts of our family, and a man whom I loved and honoured most devoutly. I have not words to tell you how much I feel myself obliged by the distinction made in my favour on this occasion, and I beg you will tell your sister so, giving her at the same time my sincerest thanks and acknowledgements. With respect to the conveyance of them hither, I think I shall be easier if they come by the Wellingborough coach, having more confidence in it than in the waggon. The passage is quicker, the quantity of lumber less, and the chances of damage are fewer in proportion. It is also an established law, that the trusty Kitch meets always the coach at its arrival, and brings hither our parcels immediately, whereas we wait sometimes two or three days, and sometimes longer, for a parcel sent by the waggon. Thanks, too, for the chocolate.

Beau's performance was exactly such as I represented it, without any embellishment. I may now add, that the next time we walked to the same place together, he repeated it. With respect to his diet, it is always of the most salutary kind: lights he never eats, and liver, having observed that it makes him sick, we never give him. Bread he eats in abundance, and it is the only thing for which he begs with much importunity. He is regularly combed, and his ears, which *are remark*ably handsome, are my own particular care.

They gather burrs while he threads all the thickets in his way, from which I deliver them myself as soon as we get home. But having taught him to take the water, and even to delight in it, I never give him a forced washing, lest he should contract a hydrophobia, and refuse the river. I have observed, too, that dogs often washed get rheumatisms, because they do not dry themselves by exercise, but lie down in their damp coats, which is hurtful to every thing but a highlander.

The Frogs are to come home this day by dinner. I want much to see what resolution the Chancellor moved against Mr. Rose. At least he will give him a trimming, and a good one, I doubt not.

Ever yours, my dear,

WM. COWPER.

P. S. I forgot to tell you that my watch is no repeater, neither good for much in its kind. It was made at Cambridge for my brother, and brought home the day after his death—a metal one, for which I paid six guineas. It has been one of my chief employments to wish for a better.

TO LADY HESKETH, NEW NORFOLK STREET, GROSVENOR SQUARE, LONDON.

MY DEAREST COZ, Saturday, July 11, 1788.

BETWEEN Homer time and walking time I catch a few minutes to relieve you from all anxiety concerning the Solandrian volume and its contents, precious to me,

by informing you that neither the one nor the other sustained the least damage by the road. Once more I beg you to give my affectionate thanks to your sister, for all her kind remembrances on this occasion, not forgetting the books, which I shall with the utmost pleasure expect by the waggon.

This short scribblement I shall send by special messenger to Newport, for the failure of Rogers the great having put an end to all banking business at Olney, we have no longer the convenience of a daily post.

What is become of the General? It is so long since I heard from him, that I wonder and am concerned. I wrote to him yesterday.

I must not forget to tell you, that since I wrote last a cover, franked by Mr. Arnott, brought me a bank note for twenty-five pounds *from Anonymous*. Those two words being all that it contained beside.

* * *

Have you seen the Gentleman's Magazine. There am I, and there am I abused likewise. Somebody has sent my Mortuary Verses, who I know not. My censurer is neither a poet nor a good reasoner, therefore a fig for all such grumblings.

* * *

The Newtons come to-morrow;—could not come to-day, his Grace of Bedford having engaged all the chaises in the town.

I have hung Grey over the chimney, and Solander *lies on* the study window-seat, spread with a green

cloth, to save him from the chafe and friction otherwise incident to his situation. He is perfectly welcome. Adieu, my dearest coz.

Thine,

JEREMY JAGO.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, July 28, 1788.

It is in vain that you tell me you have no talent at description, while in fact you describe better than any body. You have given me a most complete idea of your mansion and its situation; and I doubt not that with your letter in my hand by way of map, could I be set down on the spot in a moment, I should find myself qualified to take my walks and my pastime in whatever quarter of your paradise it should please me the most to visit. We also, as you know, have scenes at Weston worthy of description; but because you know them well, I will only say that one of them has, within these few days, been much improved; I mean the lime walk. By the help of the axe and the woodbill, which have of late been constantly employed in cutting out all straggling branches that intercepted the arch, Mr. Throckmorton has now defined it with such exactness, that no cathedral in the world can show one of more magnificence or beauty. I bless myself that I live so near it; for were it distant several miles, it would be well worth while to visit it, merely as an object of taste; not to mention the refreshment of such a gloom both to the eyes and spirits. And these are the things which our modern improvers of parks and

pleasure grounds have displaced without mercy, because, forsooth, they are rectilinear! It is a wonder they do not quarrel with the sunbeams for the same reason.

Have you seen the account of Five hundred celebrated authors now living? I am one of them; but stand charged with the high crime and misdemeanor of totally neglecting method; an accusation which, if the gentleman would take the pains to read me, he would find sufficiently refuted. I am conscious at least myself of having laboured much in the arrangement of my matter, and of having given to the several parts of my book of the Task, as well as to each poem in the first volume, that sort of slight connexion which poetry demands; for in poetry, (except professedly of the didactic kind) a logical precision would be stiff, pedantic, and ridiculous. But there is no pleasing some critics; the comfort is, that I am contented, whether they be pleased or not. At the same time, to my honour be it spoken, the chronicler of us five hundred prodigies bestows on me, for aught I know, more commendations than on any other of my confraternity. May he live to write the histories of as many thousand poets, and find me the very best among them! Amen!

I join with you, my dearest coz, in wishing that I owned the fee simple of all the beautiful scenes around you, but such emoluments were never designed for poets. Am I not happier than ever poet was, in having thee for my cousin, and in the expectation of thy arrival here whenever Strawberry Hill shall lose thee?

Ever thine,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, August 9, 1788.

The Newtons are still here, and continue with us I believe until the fifteenth of the month. Here is also my friend, Mr. Rose, a valuable young man, who, attracted by the effluvia of my genius, found me out in my retirement last January twelvemonth. I have not permitted him to be idle, but have made him transcribe for me the twelfth book of the Iliad. He brings me the compliments of several of the literati, with whom he is acquainted in town, and tells me, that from Dr. Maclaine, whom he saw lately, he learns that my book is in the hands of sixty different persons at the Hague, who are all enchanted with it, not forgetting the said Dr. Maclaine himself, who tells him that he reads it every day, and is always the better for it. O rare we!

I have been employed this morning in composing a Latin motto for the King's clock; the embellishments of which are by Mr. Bacon. That gentleman breakfasted with us on Wednesday, having come thirty-seven miles out of his way on purpose to see your cousin. At his request I have done it, and have made two: he will choose that which liketh him best. Mr. Bacon is a most excellent man, and a most agreeable companion: I would that he lived not so remote, or that he had more opportunity of travelling.

There is not, so far as I know, a syllable of the rhyming correspondence between me and my poor brother left, save and except the six lines of it quoted

in yours. I *had* the whole of it, but it perished in the wreck of a thousand other things, when I left the Temple.

Breakfast calls. Adieu!

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Aug. 18, 1788.

I LEFT you with a sensible regret, alleviated only by the consideration that I shall see you again in October. I was under some concern also, lest, not being able to give you any certain directions myself, nor knowing where you might find a guide, you should wander and fatigue yourself, good walker as you are, before you could reach Northampton. Perhaps you heard me whistle just after our separation: it was to call back Beau, who was running after you with all speed, to entreat you to return with me. For my part, I took my own time to return, and did not reach home till after one; and then so weary, that I was glad of my great chair, to the comforts of which I added a crust and a glass of rum and water, not without great occasion. Such a foot-traveller am I.

I am writing on Monday, but whether I shall finish my letter this morning depends on Mrs. Unwin's coming sooner or later down to breakfast. Something tells me that you set off to-day for Birmingham; and though it be a sort of Iricism to say here, I beseech you take care of yourself, for the day threatens great heat,—I cannot help it; the weather may be cold enough at the time when that good advice shall reach

you; but be it hot, or be it cold, to a man who travels as you travel, "take care of yourself" can never be an unseasonable caution. I am sometimes distressed on this account; for though you are young, and well made for such exploits, those very circumstances are more likely than any thing to betray you into danger.

Consule quid valeant PLANTÆ, *quid ferre recusent.*

The Newtons left us on Friday. We frequently talked about you after your departure, and every thing that was spoken was to your advantage. I know they will be glad to see you in London, and perhaps when your summer and autumn rambles are over, you will afford them that pleasure. The Throckmortons are equally well disposed to you, and them also I recommend to you as a valuable connexion, the rather because you can only cultivate it at Weston.

I have not been idle since you went, having not only laboured as usual at the Iliad, but composed a *spick and span* new piece, called "The Dog and the Water Lily," which you shall see when we meet again. I believe I related to you the incident which is the subject of it. I have also read most of Lavater's Aphorisms; they appear to me some of them wise, many of them whimsical, a few of them false, and not a few of them extravagant. *Nil illi medium.* If he finds in a man the feature or quality that he approves, he deifies him; if the contrary, he is a devil. His verdict is in neither case, I suppose, a just one.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COZWOZ, The Lodge, Aug. 21, 1788.

OUR friends, as you opine, are gone, having made us, (to ourselves at least,) a very agreeable visit. We are now as quiet as dormice in a hollow tree, but not always so, neither shall we be so to-day, nor yet to-morrow. The Frogs dine with us to-day, and to-morrow we with them. The Dowager and George arrived yesterday. They have also at their house an aunt of Mrs. Frog's named Canning, together with her husband: so we are likely to be a numerous party. But be not alarmed, my dear, lest such a feast should produce a famine. There would, I confess, be danger of it, were we to entertain such multitudes often; but we and our neighbours have, without a word said on the subject, fallen on the only method that could certainly prevent it. We receive five or six invitations, and sometimes more, for one that we give;—a measure extremely salutary to the finances of a poet;—and poet as I am, I could not eat with any comfort at their table did I not occasionally set forth my board for them. Poor Mrs. Frog is far from well. In the morning she has tremblings and flutterings and other nervous affections as constantly as the morning comes; though as the day wears off, so do her indispositions with it, and she becomes herself again. I shall press her by and by to take the medicine of your recommendation. George's company in the mean time bids fair to be of use to her. They love each other dearly, and he is ever droll and cheerful.

The behaviour of my little dog on the occasion which

I related to you has given birth to the following, which I transcribe in the hope it may entertain you at least as well as any thing that I could say in prose. It is spick and span, and unseen as yet by mortal eyes, except Mrs. Unwin's.

To me, my dear, it seemeth that we shall never by any management make a deep impression on Mrs. Montague. Persons who have been so long accustomed to praise become proof against it. Mr. Walpole's opinion of me, as I forebode, will not flatter much your predilections in favour of your cousin. I know not why, but something tells me so.

My anonymous friend has again sent me fish:—three cod, with oysters. I should like them better if he would announce himself. I have made a new frock,—the Weston uniform. We are all to meet so habited this day.—Mr. Newton has lately procured me several subscriptions, and the General, I suppose, has told you that I am likely to get those of the Scots Universities. Farewell, my ever beloved coz.

Thine most truly,

WM. COWPER.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, Weston Underwood, Aug. 28, 1788.

SHOULD you discard me from the number of your correspondents, you would treat me as I seem to deserve, though I do not actually deserve it. I have lately been engaged with company at our house, who resided with us five weeks, and have had much of the rheumatism into the bargain. Not in my fingers, you

will say;—True. But you know as well as I, that pain, be it where it may, indisposes us to writing.

You express some degree of wonder that I found you out to be sedentary, at least much a stayer within doors, without any sufficient data for my direction. Now if I should guess your figure and stature with equal success, you will deem me not only a poet but a conjurer. Yet in fact I have no pretensions of that sort. I have only formed a picture of you in my own imagination, as we ever do of a person of whom we think much, though we have never seen that person. Your height I conceive to be about five feet five inches, which, though it would make a short man, is yet height enough for a woman. If you insist on an inch or two more, I have no objection. You are not very fat, but somewhat inclined to be fat, and unless you allow yourself a little more air and exercise, will incur some danger of exceeding in your dimensions before you die. Let me, therefore, once more recommend to you to walk a little more, at least in your garden, and to amuse yourself occasionally with pulling up here and there a weed, for it will be an inconvenience to you to be much fatter than you are, at a time of life when your strength will be naturally on the decline. I have given you a fair complexion, a slight tinge of the rose in your cheeks, dark brown hair, and, if the fashion would give you leave to show it, an open and well-formed forehead. To all this I add a pair of eyes not quite black, but nearly approaching to that hue, and very animated. I have not absolutely determined on the shape of your nose, or the form of your mouth; but should you tell me that I have in other respects

drawn a tolerable likeness, have no doubt but I can describe them too. I assure you that though I have a great desire to read him, I have never seen Lavater, nor have availed myself in the least of any of his rules on this occasion. Ah, madam! if with all that sensibility of yours, which exposes you to so much sorrow, and necessarily must expose you to it, in a world like this, I have had the good fortune to make you smile, I have then painted you, whether with a strong resemblance, or with none at all, to very good purpose.

I had intended to have sent you a little poem, which I have lately finished, but have no room to transcribe it. You shall have it by another opportunity. Breakfast is on the table, and my time also fails, as well as my paper. I rejoice that a cousin of yours found my volumes agreeable to him, for, being your cousin, I will be answerable for his good taste and judgement.

When I wrote last, I was in mourning for a dear and much-valued uncle, Ashley Cowper. He died at the age of eighty-six. My best respects attend Mr. King; and, I am, dear madam,

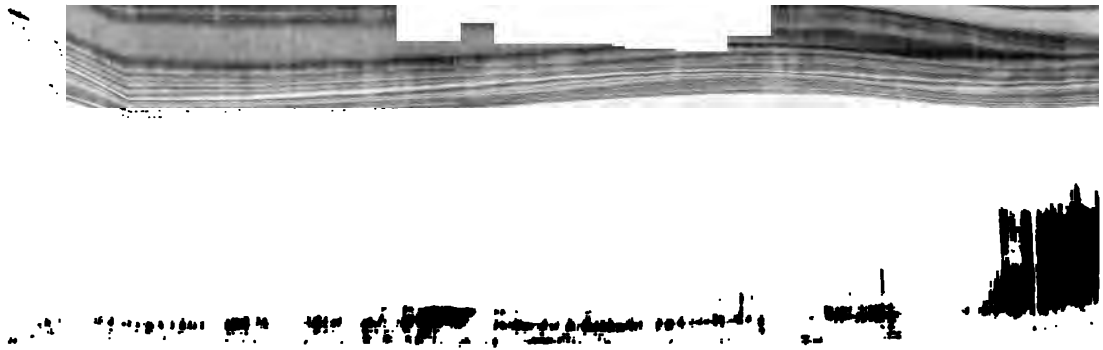
Most truly yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Sept. 11, 1788.

SINCE your departure I have twice visited the oak, and with an intention to push my enquiries a mile beyond it, where it seems I should have found another oak, much larger, and much more respectable than the former; but once I was hindered by the rain, and



once by the sultriness of the day. This latter oak has been known by the name of Judith many ages, and is said to have been an oak at the time of the Conquest. If I have not an opportunity to reach it before your arrival here, we will attempt that exploit together; and even if I should have been able to visit it ere you come, I shall yet be glad to do so; for the pleasure of extraordinary sights, like all other pleasures, is doubled by the participation of a friend.

You wish for a copy of my little dog's eulogium, which I will therefore transcribe; but by so doing, I shall leave myself but scanty room for prose.

I shall be sorry if our neighbours at the Hall should have left it, when we have the pleasure of seeing you. I want you to see them soon again, that a little *consuetudo* may wear off restraint; and you may be able to improve the advantage you have already gained in that quarter. I pitied you for the fears which deprived you of your uncle's company, and the more having suffered so much by those fears myself. Fight against that vicious fear, for such it is, as strenuously as you can. It is the worst enemy that can attack a man destined to the forum;—it ruined me. To associate as much as possible with the most respectable company, for good sense and good breeding, is, I believe, the only, at least I am sure it is the best, remedy. The society of men of pleasure will not cure it, but rather leaves us more exposed to its influence in company of better persons.

Now for the Dog and the Water Lily.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COZ, The Lodge, Sept. 13, 1788.

BEAU seems to have objections against my writing to you this morning that are not to be overruled. He will be in my lap, licking my face, and nibbling the end of my pen. Perhaps he means to say, I beg you will give my love to her, which I therefore send you accordingly. There cannot be, this hinderance excepted, a situation more favourable to the business I have in hand than mine at this moment. Here is no noise, *save* (as the poets always express it) that of the birds hopping on their perches and playing with their wires, while the sun glimmering through the elm opposite the window falls on my desk with all the softness of moonshine. There is not a cloud in the sky, nor a leaf that moves, so that over and above the enjoyment of the purest calm, I feel a well-warranted expectation that such as the day is, it will be to its end. This is the month in which such weather is to be expected, and which is therefore welcome to me beyond all others, October excepted, which promises to bring you hither. At your coming you will probably find us, and us only, or, to speak more properly, *uzz*. The Frogs, as I told you, hop into Norfolk soon, on a visit to Lord Petre, who beside his palace in Essex, has another in that county. All the brothers are now at the Hall, *save* the physician, who is employed in prescribing medicine to the Welsh at Cardiff. There lives he with *madame son épouse*, with an income of three hundred pounds a year,—all happiness and con-

tentment. The mother is also here; and here is also our uncle Gifford,—a man whom if you know you must love, and if you do not, I wish you did. But he goes this morning, and I expect every minute to see him pass my window. In volubility, variety, and earnestness of expression, he very much resembles your father, and in the sweetness of his temper too; so that though he be but a passenger, or rather a bird of passage, for his head-quarters are in France, and he only flits occasionally to England, he has much engaged my affections. I walked with him yesterday on a visit to an oak on the borders of Yardley Chase, an oak which I often visit, and which is one of the wonders that I show to all who come this way, and have never seen it. I tell them all that it is a thousand years old, verily believing it to be so, though I do not know it. A mile beyond this oak stands another, which has for time immemorial been known by the name of Judith, and is said to have been an oak when my namesake the Conqueror first came hither. And beside all this, there is a good coach-way to them both, and I design that you shall see them too.

A day or two before the arrival of your last letter we were agreeably surprised by that of a hamper, stuffed with various articles in the grocery way, corresponding exactly with a bill of parcels which accompanied them. Though we had received no advice of the same, we were not at all at a loss for the sender, and hereby, my dear, make you our very best acknowledgements for your kind present. Having had company this summer, and being also obliged now and

then to feed the Frogs, our stock of hams and tongues is not, at present much;—one of the former and two of the latter making up our whole store in that way.

I have as yet no news from the Chancellor. It is possible that none I may have till he can send me good; for to me it seems that after having expressed for me so much warmth of friendship still subsisting, he has laid himself under pretty strong obligations to do something for me, if any thing can be done. But though in my time my rest has been broken by many things, it never was yet by the desire of riches, or the dread of poverty. At the same time I have no objection to all that he can do for me, be it ever so much.

I am going this morning with the Dowager Frog to Chicheley, on a visit to the Chesters, which obliges me to shorten my scribble somewhat. Unless I finish my letter first you will not get it by this post. Therefore farewell, my dear: may God keep thee, and give us a joyful meeting;—so pray we both. Amen.

Ever thine,

WM. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Sept. 25, 1788.

Say what is the thing by my riddle design'd
Which you carried to London, and yet left behind?

I EXPECT your answer, and without a fee. The half hour next before breakfast I devote to you. The moment Mrs. Unwin arrives in the study, be what I have written much or little, I shall make my bow, and take

leave. If you live to be a judge, as if I augur right you will, I shall expect to hear of a walking circuit.

I was shocked at what you tell me of ——. Superior talents, it seems, give no security for propriety of conduct; on the contrary, having a natural tendency to nourish pride, they often betray the possessor into such mistakes as men more moderately gifted never commit. Ability, therefore, is not wisdom, and an ounce of grace is a better guard against gross absurdity than the brightest talents in the world.

I rejoice that you are prepared for transcript work: here will be plenty for you. The day on which you shall receive this, I beg you will remember to drink one glass at least to the success of the Iliad, which I finished the day before yesterday, and yesterday began the Odyssey. It will be some time before I shall perceive myself travelling in another road; the objects around me are at present so much the same; Olympus and a council of gods meet me at my first entrance. To tell you the truth, I am weary of heroes and deities, and, with reverence be it spoken, shall be glad, for variety's sake, to exchange their company for that of a Cyclops.

Weston has not been without its tragedies since you left us; Mrs. Throckmorton's piping bullfinch has been eaten by a rat, and the villain left nothing but poor Bully's beak behind him. It will be a wonder if this event does not at some convenient time employ my versifying passion. Did ever fair lady, from the Lesbia of Catullus to the present day, lose her bird and find no poet to commemorate the loss?

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAREST MADAM, Sept. 25, 1788.

How surprised was I this moment to meet a servant at the gate, who told me that he came from you! He could not have been more welcome, unless he had announced yourself. I am charmed with your kindness and with all your elegant presents. So is Mrs. Unwin, who begs me in particular to thank you warmly for the housewife, the very thing she had just begun to want. In the fire-screen you have sent me an enigma, which at present I have not the ingenuity to expound; but some Muse will help me, or I shall meet with somebody able to instruct me. In all that I have seen besides, (for that I have not yet seen,) I admire both the taste and the execution. A tooth-pick case I had; but one so large, that no modern waistcoat pocket could possibly contain it: it was some years since the Dean of Durham's, for whose sake I valued it, though to me useless. Yours is come opportunely to supply the deficiency, and shall be my constant companion to its last thread. The cakes and the apples we will eat, remembering who sent them; and when I say this, I will add also, that when we have neither apples nor cakes to eat, we will still remember you.—What the MS. poem can be, that you suppose to have been written by me, I am not able to guess; and since you will not allow that I have guessed your person well, am become shy of exercising conjecture on any meaner subject. Perhaps they may be some mortuary verses, which I wrote last year at the request of a certain parish clerk. If not, and you have never seen them, I will send you them hereafter.

You have been at Bedford. Bedford is but twelve miles from Weston. When you are at home, we are but eighteen miles asunder. Is it possible that such a paltry interval can separate us always? I will never believe it. Our house is going to be filled by a cousin of mine and her train, who will, I hope, spend the winter with us. I cannot, therefore, repeat my invitation at present, but expect me to be very troublesome on that theme next summer. I could almost scold you for not making Weston in your way home from Bedford. Though I am neither a relation, nor quite eighty-six years of age, believe me I should as much rejoice to see you and Mr. King as if I were both.

(Mrs. Unwin has this moment opened the screen, which I admire, and shall find particularly useful.)

I send you, my dear madam, the poem I promised you, and shall be glad to send you any thing and every thing I write as fast as it flows. Behold my two volumes! which, though your old acquaintance, I thought, might receive an additional recommendation in the shape of a present from myself.

What I have written I know not, for all has been scribbled in haste. I will not tempt your servant's honesty, who seems by his countenance to have a great deal, being equally watchful to preserve uncorrupted the honesty of my own.

I am, my dearest madam, with a thousand thanks for this stroke of friendship, which I feel at my heart, and with Mrs. Unwin's very best respects, most sincerely yours,

W. C.

P. S. My two hares died little more than two years since; one of them aged ten years, the other eleven years and eleven months.

Our compliments attend Mr. King.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, Weston Underwood, Oct. 11, 1788.

You are perfectly secure from all danger of being overwhelmed with presents from me. It is not much that a poet can possibly have it in his power to give. When he has presented his own works, he may be supposed to have exhausted all means of donation. They are his only superfluity. There was a time, but that time was before I commenced writer for the press, when I amused myself in a way somewhat similar to yours; allowing, I mean, for the difference between masculine and female operations. The scissors and the needle are your chief implements; mine were the chisel and the saw. In those days you might have been in some danger of too plentiful a return for your favours. Tables, such as they were, and joint-stools such as never were, might have travelled to Pertenhall in most inconvenient abundance. But I have long since discontinued this practice, and many others which I found it necessary to adopt, that I might escape the worst of all evils, both in itself and in its consequences —an idle life. Many arts I have exercised with this view, for which nature never designed me; though among them were some in which I arrived at considerable proficiency, by mere dint of the most heroic

perseverance. There is not a 'squire in all this country who can boast of having made better squirrel-houses, hutches for rabbits, or bird-cages, than myself; and in the article of cabbage-nets, I had no superior. I even had the hardiness to take in hand the pencil, and studied a whole year the art of drawing. Many figures were the fruit of my labours, which had, at least, the merit of being unparalleled by any production either of art or nature. But before the year was ended, I had occasion to wonder at the progress that may be made, in despite of natural deficiency, by dint alone of practice; for I actually produced three landscapes, which a lady thought worthy to be framed and glazed. I then judged it high time to exchange this occupation for another, lest, by any subsequent productions of inferior merit, I should forfeit the honour I had so fortunately acquired. But gardening was, of all employments, that in which I succeeded best; though even in this I did not suddenly attain perfection. I began with lettuces and cauliflowers: from them I proceeded to cucumbers; next to melons. I then purchased an orange-tree, to which, in due time, I added two or three myrtles. These served me day and night with employment during a whole severe winter. To defend them from the frost, in a situation that exposed them to its severity, cost me much ingenuity and much attendance. I contrived to give them a fire heat; and have waded night after night through the snow, with the bellows under my arm, just before going to bed, to give the latest possible puff to the embers, lest the frost should seize them before morning. Very minute beginnings have sometimes impor-

tant consequences. From nursing two or three little evergreens, I became ambitious of a green-house, and accordingly built one; which, verse excepted, afforded me amusement for a longer time than any expedient of all the many to which I have fled for refuge from the misery of having nothing to do. When I left Olney for Weston, I could no longer have a green-house of my own; but in a neighbour's garden I find a better, of which the sole management is consigned to me.

I had need take care, when I begin a letter, that the subject with which I set off be of some importance; for before I can exhaust it, be it what it may, I have generally filled my paper. But self is a subject inexhaustible, which is the reason that though I have said little, and nothing, I am afraid, worth your hearing, I have only room to add, that I am, my dear Madam,

Most truly yours,

W. C.

Mrs. Unwin bids me present her best compliments, and say how much she shall be obliged to you for the receipt to make that most excellent cake which came hither in its native pan. There is no production of yours that will not be always most welcome at Weston.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 29, 1788.

NOT to fill my paper with apologies, I will only say, that you know my occupation, and how little time it leaves me for other employments, in which, had I leisure for them, I could take much pleasure. Letter-writing would be one of the most agreeable, and especially writing to you. It happens too that at this season of the year I lie in bed later than when the days are not so short; not for the sake of indulgence, but through necessity; for the servants lying later too, there is no room for me below till near nine o'clock. Thus is my time, that part of it which I give to my correspondents, sadly abridged, so that I am at this moment in debt to them all, except one who lives in Ireland. I have occasionally however heard of your well-being; you would otherwise, notwithstanding all these hinderances, have received at least a line or two, could I have sent no more. I know too that you have heard of mine; or if not of my *well*-being, at least of my being *as well* as when you saw me.

About three days since, I was told that Mr. Wright, Lord Dartmouth's steward, was at Olney, and yesterday I passed through Olney, entering the town at one end and going out at the other, without once recollecting that such a person exists. This morning he is gone to London. My fault is therefore irreparable, unless you should at any time happen to see Mr. Wright, and will be so good as to ask his pardon for me. He is one of the last men living to whom I would show disrespect, because he is truly respectable

himself, and the servant of a most valuable master; the case, too, seems the more flagrant, because I must have passed immediately before the window of the room in which he sat, whether he was at the Swan or at Mr. Gardener's, where he dined yesterday, and I passed at two o'clock. It gives me much pleasure, however, to understand by a message from Mr. Wright, delivered here by Mr. Raban, that his Lordship enjoys better health than for years past. May he long enjoy it!

Poor Jenny Raban is declining fast toward the grave, and as fast aspiring to the skies. I expected to have heard yesterday of her death; but learned, on enquiry, that she was better. Dr. Kerr has seen her, and by virtue, I suppose, of his prescriptions, her fits, with which she was frequently troubled, are become less frequent. But there is no reason, I believe, to look for her recovery. Her case is a consumption, into which I saw her sliding swiftly in the spring. There is not much to be lamented, or that ought to be so, in the death of those that go to glory. She was a beautiful girl, and perhaps may have left a heart-ache for a legacy to some poor swain of Olney; though I never heard, beautiful as she was, that she had any *lovyers*. Many an ugly bundle can find a husband in such a place as Olney, while Venus herself would shine there unnoticed.

If you find many blots, and my writing illegible, you must pardon them in consideration of the cause. Lady Hesketh and Mrs. Unwin are both talking as if they designed to make themselves amends for the silence they are enjoined while I sit translating Homer. Mrs. Unwin is preparing the breakfast, and

not having seen each other since they parted to go to bed, they have consequently a deal to communicate.

I saw Mr. Bean lately, and he is well. I called there yesterday but found him not. He also dined at Mr. Gardener's. It gave me concern to be told by the servant that Mrs. Bean is very much indisposed with the rheumatism. I have seen Mr. Greatheed both at his own house and here, but his wife I have not seen, neither have I heard in what state of health and spirits she finds herself at present. Not long since she suffered a melancholy that seemed rather alarming. Prosperity sits well on Mr. Greatheed, and I cannot find that this advantageous change in his condition has made any alteration either in his views or his behaviour.

When we returned thanks for an excellent basket of fish, shrimps were not mentioned, because the shrimps were not found till after the letter was sent, and then by mere accident. They were brought to light however soon enough to serve the purpose for which you were so kind as to send them.

The winter is gliding merrily away while my cousin is with us. She annihilates the difference between cold and heat, gloomy skies and cloudless. Mrs. Unwin is well, and joins me in the most affectionate remembrances of the trio in Coleman's Buildings. I have written I know not what, and with the despatch of legerdemain; but with the utmost truth and consciousness of what I say, assure you, my dear friend, that I am

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Nov. 30, 1788.

YOUR letter, accompanying the books with which you have favoured me, and for which I return you a thousand thanks, did not arrive till yesterday. I shall have great pleasure in taking now and then a peep at my old friend Vincent Bourne; the neatest of all men in his versification, though when I was under his usherships, at Westminster, the most slovenly in his person. He was so inattentive to his boys, and so indifferent whether they brought him good or bad exercises, or none at all, that he seemed determined, as he was the best, so to be the last Latin poet of the Westminster line; a plot which, I believe, he executed very successfully; for I have not heard of any who has at all deserved to be compared with him.

We have had hardly any rain or snow since you left us; the roads are accordingly as dry as in the middle of summer, and the opportunity of walking much more favourable. We have no season in my mind so pleasant as such a winter: and I account it particularly fortunate that such it proves, my cousin being with us. She is in good health, and cheerful, so are we all; and this I say, knowing you will be glad to hear it, for you have seen the time when this could not be said of all your friends at Weston. We shall rejoice to see you here at Christmas; but I recollected when I hinted such an excursion by word of mouth, you gave me no great encouragement to expect you. Minds alter, and yours may be of the number of those that do so; and if it should, you will

be entirely welcome to us all. Were there no other reason for your coming than merely the pleasure it will afford to us, that reason alone would be sufficient; but after so many toils, and with so many more in prospect, it seems essential to your well-being that you should allow yourself a respite, which perhaps you can take as comfortably, (I am sure as quietly,) here as any where.

The ladies beg to be remembered to you with all possible esteem and regard; they are just come down to breakfast, and being at this moment extremely talkative, oblige me to put an end to my letter. Adieu.

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston-Underwood, Dec. 2, 1788.

I TOLD you lately that I had an ambition to introduce to your acquaintance my valuable friend, Mr. Rose. He is now before you. You will find him a person of genteel manners and agreeable conversation. As to his other virtues and good qualities, which are many, and such as are not often found in men of his years, I consign them over to your own discernment, perfectly sure that none of them will escape you. I give you joy of each other, and remain, my dear old friend, most truly yours,

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, Weston Underwood, Dec. 6, 1788.

It must, if you please, be a point agreed between us, that we will not make punctuality in writing the test of our regard for each other, lest we should incur the danger of pronouncing and suffering by an unjust sentence, and this mutually. I have told you, I believe, that the half hour before breakfast is my only letter-writing opportunity. In summer I rise rather early, and consequently at that season can find more time for scribbling than at present. If I enter my study now before nine, I find all at sixes and sevens; for servants will take, in part at least, the liberty claimed by their masters. That you may not suppose us all sluggards alike, it is necessary, however, that I should add a word or two on this subject, in justification of Mrs. Unwin, who, because the days are too short for the important concerns of knitting stockings and mending them, rises generally by candle-light; a practice so much in the style of all the ladies of antiquity who were good for any thing, that it is impossible not to applaud it.

Mrs. Battison being dead, I began to fear that you would have no more calls to Bedford; but the marriage, so near at hand, of the young lady you mention with a gentleman of that place, gives me hope again that you may occasionally approach us as heretofore, and that on some of those occasions you will perhaps find your way to Weston. The deaths of some and the marriages of others make a new world of it every

thirty years. Within that space of time, the majority are displaced, and a new generation has succeeded. Here and there one is permitted to stay a little longer, that there may not be wanting a few grave dons like myself, to make the observation. This thought struck me very forcibly the other day, on reading a paper, called the County Chronicle, which came hither in the package of some books from London. It contained news from Hertfordshire, and informed me, among other things, that at Great Berkhampstead, the place of my birth, there is hardly a family left of all those with whom, in my earlier days, I was so familiar. The houses, no doubt, remain, but the inhabitants are only to be found now by their grave-stones; and it is certain that I might pass through a town, in which I was once a sort of principal figure, unknowing and unknown. They are happy who have not taken up their rest in a world fluctuating as the sea, and passing away with the rapidity of a river. I wish from my heart that yourself and Mr. King may long continue, as you have already long continued, exceptions from the general truth of this remark. You doubtless married early, and the thirty-six years elapsed may have yet other years to succeed them. I do not forget that your relation Mrs. Battison lived to the age of eighty-six. I am glad of her longevity, because it seems to afford some assurance of yours; and I hope to know you better yet before you die.

Should you again dream of an interview with me, I hope you will have the precaution to shut all doors

and windows, that no such impertinents as those you mention may intrude a second time. It is hard that people who never meet awake, cannot come together even in sleep without disturbance. We might, I think, be ourselves untroubled, at a time when we are so incapable of giving trouble to others, even had we the inclination.

I have never seen the Observer, but am pleased with being handsomely spoken of by an old school-fellow. Cumberland and I boarded together in the same house at Westminster. He was at that time clever, and I suppose has given proof sufficient to the world that he is still clever: but of all that he has written, it has never fallen in my way to read a syllable, except perhaps in a magazine or review, the sole sources, at present, of all my intelligence. Addison speaks of persons who grow dumb in the study of eloquence, and I have actually studied Homer till I am become a mere ignoramus in every other province of literature.

An almost general cessation of egg-laying among the hens has made it impossible for Mrs. Unwin to enterprise a cake. She, however, returns you a thousand thanks for the receipt; and being now furnished with the necessary ingredients, will begin directly. My letter-writing time is spent, and I must now to Homer. With my best respects to Mr. King, I remain, dear Madam,

Most affectionately yours,

W. C.

When I wrote last, I told you, I believe, that Lady Hesketh was with us. She is with us now, making

a cheerful winter for us at Weston. The acquisition of a new friend, and, at a late day, the recovery of the friend of our youth, are two of the chief comforts of which this life is susceptible.

TO ROBERT SMITH, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR, Weston-Underwood, Dec. 20, 1788.

MRS. UNWIN is in tolerable health, and adds her warmest thanks to mine for your favour, and for your obliging enquiries. My own health is better than it has been many years. Long time I had a stomach that would digest nothing, and now nothing disagrees with it; an amendment for which I am, under God, indebted to the daily use of soluble tartar, which I have never omitted these two years. I am still, as you may suppose, occupied in my long labour. The Iliad has nearly received its last polish. And I have advanced in a rough copy as far as to the ninth book of the Odyssey. My friends are some of them in haste to see the work printed, and my answer to them is—"I do nothing else, and this I do day and night;—it must in time be finished."

My thoughts, however, are not engaged to Homer only. I cannot be so much a poet as not to feel greatly for the King, the Queen, and the country. My speculations on these subjects are indeed melancholy, for no such tragedy has befallen in my day. We are forbidden to trust in man; I will not therefore say I trust in Mr. Pitt;—but in his counsels, under the blessing of Providence, the remedy is, I be-

lieve, to be found, if a remedy there be. His integrity, firmness, and sagacity, are the only human means that seem adequate to the great emergence.

You say nothing of your own health, of which I should have been happy to have heard favourably. May you long enjoy the best. Neither Mrs. Unwin nor myself have a sincerer or a warmer wish, than for your felicity.

I am, my dear Sir,
Your most obliged and affectionate,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR, The Lodge, Jan. 19, 1789.

I HAVE taken, since you went away, many of the walks which we have taken together; and none of them, I believe, without thoughts of you. I have, though not a good memory in general, yet a good local memory, and can recollect, by the help of a tree or a stile, what you said on that particular spot. For this reason I purpose, when the summer is come, to walk with a book in my pocket; what I read at my fireside I forget, but what I read under a hedge, or at the side of a pond, that pond and that hedge will always bring to my remembrance; and this is a sort of *memoria technica*, which I would recommend to you, if I did not know that you have no occasion for it.

I am reading Sir John Hawkins, and still hold the same opinion of his book, as when you were here. There are in it, undoubtedly, some awkwardnesses of

phrase, and which is worse, here and there some unequivocal indications of a vanity not easily pardonable in a man of his years; but on the whole I find it amusing, and to me at least, to whom every thing that has passed in the literary world within these five-and-twenty years is new, sufficiently replete with information. Mr. Throckmorton told me about three days since, that it was lately recommended to him by a sensible man, as a book that would give him great insight into the history of modern literature, and modern men of letters, a commendation which I really think it merits. Fifty years hence, perhaps, the world will feel itself obliged to him.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR, The Lodge, Jan. 24, 1789.

We have heard from my cousin in Norfolk Street; she reached home safely, and in good time. An observation suggests itself, which, though I have but little time for observation making, I must allow myself time to mention. Accidents, as we call them, generally occur when there seems least reason to expect them; if a friend of ours travels far in different roads, and at an unfavourable season, we are reasonably alarmed for the safety of one in whom we take so much interest; yet how seldom do we hear a tragical account of such a journey! It is, on the contrary, at home, in our yard or garden, perhaps in our parlour, that disaster finds us; in any place, in short, where we seem perfectly out of the reach of danger. The

lesson inculcated by such a procedure on the part of Providence towards us seems to be that of perpetual dependence.

Having preached this sermon, I must hasten to a close. You know that I am not idle, nor can I afford to be so; I would gladly spend more time with you, but by some means or other this day has hitherto proved a day of hinderance and confusion.

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, Weston, Jan. 29, 1789.

THIS morning I said to Mrs. Unwin, "I must write to Mrs. King: her long silence alarms me—something has happened." These words of mine proved only a prelude to the arrival of your messenger with his most welcome charge, for which I return you my sincerest thanks. You have sent me the very things I wanted, and which I should have continued to want, had not you sent them. As often as the wine is set on the table, I have said to myself, This is all very well; but I have no bottle-stands: and myself as often replied, No matter; you can make shift without them. Thus I and myself have conferred together many a day; and you, as if you had been privy to the conference, have kindly supplied the deficiency, and put an end to the debate for ever.

When your messenger arrived I was beginning to dress for dinner, being engaged to dine with my neighbour Mr. Throckmorton, from whose house I am just

returned, and snatch a few moments before supper to tell you how much I am obliged to you. You will not, therefore, find me very prolix at present; but it shall not be long before you shall hear further from me. Your honest old neighbour sleeps under our roof, and will be gone in the morning before I shall have seen him.

I have more items than one by which to remember the late frost: it has cost me the bitterest uneasiness. Mrs. Unwin got a fall on the gravel-walk covered with ice, which has confined her to an upper chamber ever since. She neither broke nor dislocated any bones; but received such a contusion below the hip, as crippled her completely. She now begins to recover, after having been helpless as a child for a whole fortnight; but so slowly at present, that her amendment is even now almost imperceptible.

Engaged, however, as I am with my own private anxieties, I yet find leisure to interest myself not a little in the distresses of the Royal Family, especially in those of the Queen. The Lord Chancellor called the other morning on Lord Stafford: entering the room, he threw his hat on the sofa at the fireside, and clasping his hands, said, I have heard of distress, and I have read of it; but I never saw distress equal to that of the Queen. This I know from particular and certain authority.

My dear Madam, I have not time to enlarge at present on this subject, or to touch any other. Once more, therefore, thanking you for your kindness, of which I am truly sensible; and thanking, too, Mr.

King for the favour he has done me in subscribing to my Homer, and at the same time begging you to make my best compliments to him; I conclude myself, with Mrs. Unwin's acknowledgements of your most acceptable present to her,

Your obliged and affectionate

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Jan. 29, 1789.

I SHALL be a better, at least a more frequent correspondent, when I have done with Homer. I am not forgetful of any letters that I owe, and least of all forgetful of my debts in that way to you; on the contrary, I live in a continual state of self-reproach for not writing more punctually; but the old Grecian, whom I charge myself never to neglect, lest I should never finish him, has at present a voice that seems to drown all other demands, and many to which I could listen with more pleasure than even to his *os rotundum*. I am now in the eleventh book of the Odyssey, conversing with the dead. Invoke the Muse in my behalf, that I may roll the stone of Sisyphus with some success. To do it as Homer has done it is, I suppose, in our verse and language, impossible; but I will hope not to labour altogether to as little purpose as Sisyphus himself did.

Though I meddle little with politics, and can find but little leisure to do so, the present state of things unavoidably engages a share of my attention. But as

they say, Archimedes, when Syracuse was taken, was found busied in the solution of a problem, so, come what may, I shall be found translating Homer.

Sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, Jan. 31, 1789.

I HAVE dined thrice at the Hall since we lost you, and this morning accompanied Mrs. Frog in her chaise to Chicheley. What vagary I shall perform next is at present uncertain, but such violent doings must have proportionable consequences. Mrs. Unwin certainly recovers, but not fast enough to satisfy me. She now moves from chamber to chamber without help of wheels, but not without help of a staff on one side, and a human prop on the other. In another week I hope she will be able to descend the staircase, but it will probably be long ere she will move unsupported. Yesterday an old man came hither on foot from Kimbolton; he brought a basket addressed to me from my yet unseen friend Mrs. King; it contained two pair of bottle-stands, her own manufacture; a knitting bag, and a piece of plum-cake. The time seems approaching when that good lady and we are to be better acquainted; and all these *douceurs* announce it.

I have lately had a letter to write daily, and sometimes more than one: this is one reason why I have not sooner answered your last. You will not forget that you allowed me a latitude in that respect, and I

begin already to give you proof how much I am persuaded of the sincerity with which you did it. In truth, I am the busiest man that ever lived sequestered as I do, and am never idle. My days accordingly roll away with a most tremendous rapidity.

Mr. Chester, who if not a professed virtuoso, is yet a person of some skill in articles of virtù, produced for our amusement a small drawer furnished with seals and impressions of seals,—antiques. When he had displayed and we had admired all his treasures of this kind, I took the ring from my finger, which you gave me, and offered it to his inspection, telling him by whom it was purchased, where, and at what price. He examined it with much attention, and begged me to let him take an impression from it. He did so, and expressed still more admiration. I put it again on my finger, and in a quarter of an hour he begged to take another. Having taken another, he returned it to me, saying, that he had shown me an impression of a seal accounted the best in England, (if I mistake not, it was a Hercules, an antique in possession of the Duke of Northumberland,) but that he thought mine a better, and much undersold at thirty guineas. He took the impression with much address, and I never myself viewed it before to so great advantage.

It would be an easy matter to kill me, by putting me into a chaise and commanding me to talk as I go. It is astonishing how exhausted I feel myself after rumbling and chattering incessantly for three hours.

Mrs. Frog, of Bath, is better, and George continues at the Hall. Mr. and Mrs. Gifford are expected there next Tuesday. Bully is in perfect health, and

if I can secure him from such a fate, shall never be cat's-meat. Take care of thyself for my sake, that I may see thee yet again in due season. It is very kind in Mr. Rose to distinguish so honourably a poor poet like me, and it shall be my endeavour to merit by my future good behaviour as a bard the favour which he shows me now. Your kind expression on the same subject I will never forget; but I had a thousand times rather be as poor as all poets are, than you should ungown yourself to prevent it.

I sent my verses to the WORLD at the wrong time. That paper is certainly veering, and has been veering for some weeks past: it was not likely therefore that the printer of it should do any thing less than suppress a squib sent hissing at the Morning Herald, the principal trumpet of the party he had just adopted. Farewell, my dearest coz. With Mrs. Unwin's affectionate respects, I am ever thine,

WM. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAR COUSIN, Weston Lodge, Feb. 4, 1789.

A LETTER of mine is no sooner sealed and sent than I begin to be dissatisfied with, and to hate it. I have accordingly hated the two letters that I have sent to *you* since your departure, on many accounts, but principally because they have neither of them expressed any proportion of what I have felt. I have mourned for the loss of you, and they have not said so. Deal with them as you desire me, for another reason, to *deal with* yours,—burn them, for they deserve it.

The room over the study is still the place of our habitation, though Mrs. Unwin is certainly on the recovery. This day we have both been more sensible of an amendment in the part affected, than on any day since she received the hurt. Yet even now the chief subject of our boast is merely this, not that she walks, but that she limps with less labour. But we are, I hope, arrived at that stage of the affair, when one day will do more toward her restoration than three days did at the beginning.

I thank you for all your politics and anecdotes of political persons, and you may depend on it that all the treason and treasonable matter with which you shal entrust me, shall be committed to the flames; I confide in you for the same prudent disposal of all my wicked and malicious communications. Perhaps a time is at hand when it may not be altogether so safe to give our free sentiments of public persons, even in a private letter, as it has been these many years to express them with the utmost licentiousness in print. A vicious government is always a jealous and a vindictive one. But in the worst of times we may arch our eye-brows and shrug our shoulders; and that shall be our comfort when all other comforts fail.

This day's post brought me a letter from the *Bouton de Rose*. Having told me that he had called on you last Sunday evening, in his way from Chiswick, and spent three most agreeable hours with you and your sister, he proceeds thus:—"Indeed, my dear Sir, Lady Hesketh flattered and gratified me much by the polite and kind attentions with which she honoured me. Since my father's death I have not been exposed

to the temptation of much notice, therefore my feelings are not altogether blunted by the frequency of the occurrence, and I must feel sensibly obliged when virtue, understanding, and rank condescend to assure me of their regard. I do myself an honour when I declare I love Lady Hesketh,—but it is an honour I cannot forego, and I sincerely believe there are few persons to whom her Ladyship has been known, who have not experienced a similarity of feelings with myself."

I rejoice that my young friend has so just an estimation of what deserves his affections, and love him the better for it.

The Athenäid sleeps while I write this. I have made tables of contents for twelve books of it, and have yet eight to analyse. I must then give somewhat like a critical account of the whole, as critical at least as the brevity it will be necessary to observe, will allow. A poem consisting of twenty books, could not perhaps hope for many readers who would go fairly through it, and this has possibly missed a part of the praise it might have received, had the story been comprised within more reasonable limits. I am the more persuaded this is the case, having found in it many pages to admire. It is condemned I dare say by those who have never read the half of it; at the same time I do not mean to say that it is on the whole, a first-rate poem, but certainly it does not deserve to be cast aside as lumber, the treatment which I am told it has generally met with.

This morning I had a visit from Mr. Greatheed. *He has* been lately in London, and took the oppor-

tunity to get miniatures of himself and his wife. His wife's he showed me: it seemed to me admirably well done, and I asked by whom. He said by Englefeldt, —if I heard and remember the name aright. He then fixing his eyes on me said, I wish I had yours! Mine, I replied, is nowhere extant. He replied and said,— That's a pity; I expect Englefeldt soon to call on me. —Would you give me leave to bring him over to Weston that he may take your likeness? I should be happy to have it.—I answered, I could not possibly refuse a request that did me so much honour. I shall not therefore at last die without leaving something behind me in my own likeness. If Fuseli should happen to come on the same errand, I shall be multiplied with a witness. I felt myself, however, pleased with Mr. Greatheed's request, not because I am fool enough to think a phiz like mine worthy to be perpetuated, but because it seemed to bespeak him more warmly affected toward me than I suspected.

Is it possible that the first volume of Sir John Hawkins's Johnson can have been put into any of your trunks or boxes by mistake? for I can only find the second. I looked for it soon after you went, but forgot till now to mention it.

With Mrs. Unwin's best compliments, I remain, my beloved coz,

Most truly thine,

WM. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 15, 1789.

HORACE censures the Phæacian youth for having spent too much of their time in taking care of their skins, and I am in danger myself of meriting to fall under the same censure. My correspondents at least have cause to deplore the day when you first recommended to me the flesh-brush in the use of which I now spend most of the time which formerly I could give to them. The practice is, I suppose, salutary as most things are that are troublesome; and yet be it as salutary as its most sanguine advocate can allege, it is certainly either not infallible, or must be long pursued in order to be made effectual, for yesterday the lumbago seized me exactly in the moment when I was currying the very part which the lumbago always seizes. But I am not discouraged, on the contrary, I scrub with redoubled ardour, and have this morning received much benefit in said part by the operation.

We are delighted with your accounts of the King, and with the symptoms that now show themselves of his speedy recovery. May a few more weeks confirm our hopes, and place him on his throne again to the everlasting mortification of the dogs who now grin and go about the city, grudging that they are not satisfied. * * * *

The tenth of this month was what we call here, a High-Buck-Holiday. On that day Mrs. Unwin descended, for the first time since her fall, into the study. We have twice taken walks into the orchard, limp*ingly* indeed, with much labour, and some pain; but

much, I believe, to her benefit. For this reason I regret these perpetual storms, which will not suffer a more frequent repetition of that remedy; but notwithstanding so much necessary confinement she recovers strength, and the use of her leg daily, and though thinner than before, looks as well as ever. She bids me give you many thanks, on her part, for all your enquiries and kind mention of her.

Among the few events which occur at Weston, it seems one of the most worthy to be here recorded, that about a week since, I had an evening visit from Mr. Canniford. His business was to solicit my subscription to a publication of ancient Inscriptions, but I had the barbarity to refuse it. He pleased me when he went. I ought to add, that the work is not his, nor by any friend of his, for which cause I found it the less difficult to be close-fisted.

My neighbour George is proceeding with the transcript of my Homer, having taken it up where you left it. This reviewing business I find too much an interruption in my main concern, and when I return the books to Johnson, shall desire him to send me either authors less impatient, or no more till I have finished Homer. Mr. Frog goes to Town on Tuesday, on which day I dine at the Hall, for the consolation of his wife in his absence. He returns on Thursday. Bully is in perfect health, and sings all day. I have planted all the laurels you wished I should, viz. two dozen more.

Adieu, my beloved cousin, ever truly yours,

WM. COWPER.

My love to the Hillikins.

P. S. The miniature of Mrs. Greatheed appeared to me to be exceedingly well executed, with great freedom and elegance, and by what I have heard of her, must be as favourable a copy of her physiognomy as you can wish should be made of mine. Her husband will suffer no engraving to be made from it without my sovereign permission. Of that you may rest assured.

This subject reminds me of the cameo of Sir Thomas, which you have so kindly destined to a place in my study. Can it not accompany the pamphlet you mentioned, and which we long to see? You cannot regret your late tranquil mornings and evenings here more than we regret that you do not still enjoy them. But—*le bons tems viendra.* I have owed Mr. Rose a letter so long, that the thought of it haunts me continually. I must pay him soon, if it be only for peace of conscience.

Once more, my dear coz, farewell.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Wednesday, Feb. 25, 1789.

You dislike the crossing of letters, and so do I; yet though I write at the hazard of that inconvenience, I feel that I must write this evening. My hands are at present less full than usual. Having lately sent Johnson as much Review work as will serve to satisfy him for a time, I allow myself a little vacation from those *labours*, which, however, I must soon resume.

The King's recovery is with us a subject of daily

conversation and of continual joy. It is so providentially timed that no man who believes a Providence at all can say less of it than that *This is the finger of God!* Never was a hungry faction so mortally disappointed, nor the integrity of an upright administration more openly rewarded. It is a wonderful era in the history of this country, and posterity will envy us the happiness of having lived at such a period. We who are loyal subjects and love our monarch, may now take up the old Jacobite ditty, and say *The king shall enjoy his own again,*—an application which I fear we should never have had an opportuuity to make had his recovery been delayed but a little longer. The faction at home have driven too fast, and the Irish will find that they have made a blunder. Now let us listen to the raptures that will be pretended on this occasion. Sheridan, I expect, will soar in rhetorical ecstasies; Burke will say his prayers are answered; and Fox will term it the happiest event that he has ever witnessed; and while they thus speak, they will gnash their teeth, and curse inwardly. Oh! they are a blessed junto!—may opposition to ministry be their business while they live!

You must not yet, my dear, felicitate me on the double recovery of the King and Mrs. Unwin too. I rather think it probable that the King will be able to rule us, before she will be able to walk. She boasts, indeed, that she is as active as old Farmer Archer, but she would find few hardy enough to bet on her head, were a trial to take place between them. My hopes are chiefly in the approach of a gentler season,

for the progress of her amendment now is almost imperceptible.

About a fortnight since I received six bottles of rum from Henry, who might, according to what the General told me, have sent seven had he pleased,—no law forbidding it. I have written twice to the General, and have had no answer;—Is he ill? or can you tell me what it is that occasions his silence?

Mr. Newton writes me word that Martin Madan, on his way to London, where he intended to have spent a day or two with his sister, whom he had not seen these four years, was seized with an asthma, and obliged to return to Epsom. His illness continued a fortnight, and he was judged to be in great danger: he, however, recovered. By the report of his physicians he is not likely to last long.

I dined yesterday at the Hall, where, notwithstanding the difference of our political sentiments, we were perfectly at peace with each other. Religion and politics both excluded, we are sometimes threatened with a dearth of topics, but in general make a tolerable shift without them. They are always kind and friendly.

Mrs. Unwin's best compliments attend you. I am, my dear, most truly years.

WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COZ, Weston Lodge, March 5, 1789.

SINCE I send you much verse, I shall send you the less prose. Desirous to forward the enclosed to you

as early as possible, I violate my engagements to Homer for once, and give the morning to the King, the Queen, and you. On the word of a poet, I can assure you that I have done my best, sensible that when verses are presented to a royal personage, they ought not to be slovenly put together, nor such as one might produce between sleeping and waking. I have bestowed praise, which, on these occasions, is a thing of course, but have endeavoured to dress it so as to give it some air of novelty; and the best of the matter is, that though it be praise, it is truth, and I could swear to it. Had the King and the Queen been such as the world has been pestered with ever since such folks were heard of, they should have had no verse from me, unless you had insisted; but being such as they are, it seemed necessary that I, who am now poet by profession, should not leave an event in which their happiness and that of the nation are so much concerned uncelebrated.

Many thanks, my dear, for the parcel, which was truly welcome, especially on account of the cameo, in which, however, unless Sir Thomas altered much after I saw him last, I cannot trace much resemblance of him. In the nose, forehead, and eyes, some likeness; in cheek, chin, and mouth, none at all; which I wonder at the more because I have seen the strongest resemblances taken in that manner. But I am happy to have it, though but a remote copy of one whom we both knew and loved. I have read the pamphlet, and admire both the matter and manner of it; but how the deuce a country gentleman should be so accurately and intimately informed as the writer ser-

tainly is, has excited some wonder both in Mrs. Unwin and in me. Had he rather chosen to write in the character of a gentleman, resident in town, to his friend in the country, I should have found it a more natural procedure. His minute knowledge of the characters and views of both parties would then have been easily accounted for, whereas now it is rather mysterious. But this is no great matter,—a *faux-pas*, if it be one, that does not at all affect the sequel. Permit me to add to all this, that Molly Pears and Hannah, together with their duty to your ladyship, send their love and thanks to Mrs. Eaton for her kind remembrance of them.

Mr. Bean called here last night, when I had the pleasure of conversing with him on the subject of the royal recovery. His heart is warm on that theme, and we had a hearty laugh at the Opposition and their blundering friends, the Irish. When the knowing ones are so completely taken in, it is no wonder if poor Teague is entrapped also. I shall not forget to thank you, too, for your papers, which are really useful as an antidote to the baneful Herald.

Adieu, my dear; I can say no more just now, but that I am, with Mrs. Unwin's affectionate compliments, who is still a stick-propped walker,

Ever yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, March 6, 1789.

To travel so far, and come back in no better health, hardly pays you for the trouble of the journey. A southern trip would be more likely to benefit you than a northern. He whose pores have been stopped during a whole English winter, need not go to Scotland to have them shut still faster. But spring is at hand, and we hope that all your present complaints will give way to the influences of a warmer atmosphere.

Mrs. Unwin had a terrible fall, which by its consequences confined her above stairs a whole month, and she is still so lame as to be able to walk only on smooth ground, and with a stick, and for not more than a quarter of an hour at a time.

As for me, I am as well as usual. We shall rejoice to see you when it shall suit you to come over. Our affectionate compliments to Mrs. Bull and your son. I have not time to add more, but that I am,

Yours,

W. COWPER.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, March 12, 1789.

I FEEL myself in no small degree unworthy of the kind solicitude which you express concerning me and my welfare, after a silence so much longer than I gave you reason to expect. I should indeed account myself inexcusable, had I not to allege in my defence perpetual engagements of such a kind as would by no means

be dispensed with. Had Homer alone been in question, Homer should have made room for you: but I have had other work in hand, at the same time, equally pressing, and more laborious. Let it suffice to say, that I have not wilfully neglected you for a moment, and that you have never been out of my thoughts a day together. But I begin to perceive, that if a man will be an author, he must live neither to himself nor to his friends so much as to others, whom he never saw nor shall see.

My promise to follow my last letter with another speedily, which promise I kept so ill, is not the only one which I am conscious of having made to you, and but very indifferently performed. I promised you all the smaller pieces that I should produce, as fast as occasion called them forth, and leisure occurred to write them. Now, the fact is, that I have produced several since I made that fair profession, of which I have sent you hardly any. The reason is, that, transcribed into the body of a letter, they would leave me no room for prose; and that other conveyance than by the post I cannot find, even after enquiry made among all my neighbours for a traveller to Kimbolton. Well, we shall see you, I hope, in the summer, and then I will show you all. I will transcribe one for you every morning before breakfast as long as they last; and when you come down you shall find it laid on your napkin. I sent one last week to London, which by some kind body or another, I know not whom, is to be presented to the Queen. The subject, as you may guess, is the King's recovery,—a theme that might make a bad poet a good one, and a good one excel himself. This, too, you shall see when we meet, un-

less it should bounce upon you before from some periodical register of all such matters.

I shall commission my cousin, who lately left us, to procure for me the book you mention. Being, and having long been, so deep in the business of translation, it was natural that I should have my thoughts on that subject. I have accordingly had as many as would of themselves, perhaps, make a volume, and shall be glad to compare them with those of any writer recommended by Mr. Martyn. When you write next to that gentleman, I beg you, madam, to present my compliments to him, with thanks both for the mention of Mr. Twining's book, and for the honour of his name among my subscribers.

Mrs. Unwin, though two months ago she fell, is still lame. The severity of the season, which has not suffered her to exercise herself in the open air, has, no doubt, retarded her recovery: but she recovers, though even more slowly than she walks. She joins me in best respects to yourself and Mr. King, and in hearty desires to see you both at Weston. Forgive the past. I make no more promises, except to remain always, my dear madam, Your affectionate,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH, NEW NORFOLK STREET, GROSVENOR SQUARE, LONDON.

MY DEAREST COZ, The Lodge, April 6, 1789.

YOU received, I suppose, about a fortnight since, a letter from me, containing divers matters of which you have hitherto said nothing. In that letter I asked

you what we should do with our Verses on the King's Recovery; for that they should be printed by some means or other seems expedient. For my own part, I know not very well what course to take. I am not ambitious of figuring very often in the Magazine, for reasons which perhaps my vanity may suggest to me, and which your zeal for my success may possibly suggest to you. It seems rather a publication in which candidates should wish to appear, than they who have acquired some little rank already. But the decision of this important point, as then, so I still refer absolutely to you.

* * * * * *

When you next see Mr. Rose, tell him that I love him, though I do not write to him. It is to be hoped that none of my correspondents will measure my regard for them by the frequency, or rather *seldomcy* of my epistles. It is very little that I can do, occupied as I am, toward satisfying their just demands upon me, and I am at this moment in debt to every creature to whom I ever write at all. Mr. Rose informed me in his last, that in conversation with the Archbishop of York, he had mentioned to him my translation of Homer. It was news to his Grace; he had never heard of it before. Consequently he has not yet subscribed. But is there no way of getting at him? for his rank and literary repute are such, that would he give me his name, I had rather admit him to a place in my list for nothing than go without it. He was tutor to your late friend and mine at Oxford.

* * * * * *

We have had our rejoicings also at Weston. Last

Saturday fortnight Mr. Frog illuminated the front of his house in the handsomest manner, threw up many rockets, gave a large bonfire and beer to the people. I was there, and, as my friends tell me, caught a violent cold on the occasion, though I was not sensible of it myself. Certain it is, however, that whether in consequence of that vagary or not, I have since been miserably tormented with a distemper called a canker. It seized my tongue, and affected me frequently both in the day and in the night with sensations which I could hardly bear, and not at all describe. I now just begin to eat again as other people do, and shall dine at the Hall to-morrow.

My dear, April is come, and May cannot be very far off. In May, you know, we are to see you here. Remember this. I know you will come if it be possible, because you assured me that nothing but impossibility should prevent you. Need I add that we shall both be happy to receive you? Certainly I need not, did not the custom established in all such cases require it. For it is true, and doubtless you already know it, that we are never so comfortable as when you are with us. Mrs. Unwin heartily subscribes to this, and sends you her best remembrances. She is still lame, but in a way of a-mend-ment,—that is to say, mends very slowly.

* * * * * *

Believe me, as I truly am, thine,

WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, April 14, 1789.

I THREATENED you with this, my cousin, by the hands of Mr. Menzies, and it would have reached you sooner had he been the bearer; but Mr. Bull gave me yesterday a morning call, and offered to be my Mercury on the occasion, promising at the same time to deliver any pacquet with which I should entrust him into your own hands. He wanted, he said, an errand by way of introduction, and could not on any other terms find courage enough to call on you. To alleviate therefore his terrors, and to procure you a visit from a man whom I know you will be glad to see, I have substituted him in the place of the first intended.

Your letters in which you postpone your visit to an uncertain period, though I felt the force of your reason, sunk my spirits for a time. Woodcocks, I said, should come in the winter, and go in the spring; but the order of nature is reversed that I may be disappointed. But I depend on you with an absolute reliance, that you will return as soon as you can, and with this persuasion shall endeavour in the mean time to compose my spirits.

Place it entirely to the account of my forgetfulness that the receipt of your *favour*, (such in a double sense,) was not sooner acknowledged. It happened that the very evening on which it arrived, Hannah was by invitation gone to the Hall to a dance, given on occasion of the King's recovery. Mrs. Unwin immediately sent it after her, and it was pinned before her then and there. She was not a little proud of

being the only lady in the company so distinguished, and is sorry that you have not been sooner thanked for it. She is truly a good girl, and in no part of her behaviour blameable. Her chief occupation at present in the day-time is to make black lace for a cloak, which she does, by the account of the judicious in those matters, exceedingly well. In the evening she works at her needle. Ever since the first week or ten days of Mrs. Unwin's lameness she has slept on the floor in a corner of her closet, that she might be at hand to assist her as often as she wanted help; and though sometimes called from her pallet twice or thrice in a night, has risen always with an affectionate readiness that no artifice can imitate.

You very reasonably supposed, my dear, that I was not unacquainted with the figure I had made in the Morning Herald: yet true it is that the first notice I had of it was from yourself. Whether the Frogs never sent me that paper, or whether I overlooked them, (for I generally skim it hastily over,) the information was entirely news to me. I am inclined with you to suppose that they sent them. I sent to the General Evening an account of their illumination; and to return the compliment, they doubtless sent my verses to the Herald. I fully purposed to have fished it out yesterday when I dined there, but for want of a fair opportunity at first, afterwards forgot it.

Mr. Frog goes to town on Thursday, and his wife follows him on the Monday after. She told me with a significant sort of a look that she was going on purpose to be present at the ball at Brooks's. I answered, It is indifferent to me on what account you go, if you

do but take care of yourself while you are gone, and return in good health to Weston. Thus, and by such management as this, I contrive to avoid all party disputation,—a moderate course, which I think myself the more at liberty to pursue, because my political principles are upon record, having long since been printed.

I have considered, and had indeed before I received your last, considered of the practicability of a new publication, and the result of my thoughts on that topic is, that with my present small stock of small pieces, the matter is not feasible. I have but few, and the greater part of those few have already appeared in the Magazine;—a circumstance which of itself would render a collection of them just at this time improper. It is, however, an increasing fund, and a month perhaps seldom passes in which I do not add something to it. In time their number will make them more important, and in time possibly I may produce something *in itself* of more importance; then all may be packed off to the press together, and in the interim whatever I may write shall be kept secret among ourselves, that being new to the public, it may appear, *when* it appears, with more advantage.

Two copies accompany this:—the verses sent to the Queen; and the Queen's Visit.

The clock strikes nine;—good night, my dear, and God bless thee!

Yours ever,

WM. COWPER.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, Weston, April 22, 1789.

HAVING waited hitherto in expectation of the messenger whom, in your last, you mentioned a design to send, I have at length sagaciously surmised that you delay to send him in expectation of hearing first from me. I would that his errand hither were better worthy the journey. I shall have no very voluminous packet to charge him with when he comes. Such, however, as it is, it is ready; and has received an addition in the interim of one copy, which would not have made a part of it had your Mercury arrived here sooner. It is on the subject of the Queen's visit to London on the night of the illuminations. Mrs. Unwin, knowing the burthen that lies on my back too heavy for any but Atlantean shoulders, has kindly performed the copyist's part, and transcribed all that I had to send you. Observe, madam, I do not write thus to hasten your messenger hither, but merely to account for my own silence. It is probable that the later he arrives, the more he will receive when he comes; for I never fail to write when I think I have found a favourable subject.

We mourn that we must give up the hope of seeing you and Mr. King at Weston. Had our correspondence commenced sooner, we had certainly found the means of meeting; but it seems that we were doomed to know each other too late for a meeting in this world. May a better world make us amends, as it certainly will, if I ever reach a better! Our interviews here are but imperfect pleasures at the best; and generally

from such as promise us most gratification, we receive the most disappointment. But disappointment is, I suppose, confined to the planet on which we dwell;—the only one in the universe, probably, that is inhabited by sinners.

I did not know, or even suspect, that when I received your last messenger, I received so eminent a disciple of Hippocrates; a physician of such absolute control over disease and the human constitution, as to be able to put a pestilence into his pocket, confine it there, and to let it loose at his pleasure. We are much indebted to him, that he did not give us here a stroke of his ability.

I must not forget to mention that I have received, (probably not without your privity,) Mr. Twining's valuable volume. For a long time I supposed it to have come from my bookseller, who now and then sends me a new publication; but I find, on enquiry, that it came not from him. I beg, madam, if you are aware that Mr. Twining himself sent it, or your friend Mr. Martyn, that you will negotiate for me on the occasion, and contrive to convey to the obliging donor my very warmest thanks. I am impatient till he receives them. I have not yet had time to do justice to a writer so sensible, elegant, and entertaining, by a complete perusal of his work; but I have with pleasure sought out all those passages to which Mr. Martyn was so good as to refer me, and am delighted to observe the exact agreement in opinion on the subject of translation in general, and on that of Mr. Pope's in particular, that subsists between Mr. Twining and myself. "Ornament for ever!" cries Pope; "Sim-

plicity for ever!" cries Homer. No two can be more opposite.

With Mrs. Unwin's best compliments, I remain, my dear madam, your obliged and affectionate

W. C.

Our joint respects attend Mr. King.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, Thursday, April 30, 1789.

I THOUGHT to have sent you, by the return of your messenger a letter; at least, something like one: but instead of sleeping here, as I supposed he would, he purposes to pass the night at Lavendon, a village three miles off. This design of his is but just made known to me, and it is now near seven in the evening. Therefore, lest he should be obliged to feel out his way, in an unknown country, in the dark, I am forced to scribble a hasty word or two, instead of devoting, as I intended, the whole evening to your service.

A thousand thanks for your basket, and all the good things that it contained; particularly for my brother's Poems, whose hand-writing struck me the moment I saw it. They gave me some feelings of a melancholy kind, but not painful. I will return them to you by the next opportunity. I wish that mine, which I send you, may prove half as pleasant to you as your excellent cakes and apples have proved to us. You will then think yourself sufficiently recompensed for your obliging present. If a crab-stock can transform a pippin into a nonpareil, what may not I effect in a

translation of Homer? Alas! I fear, nothing half so valuable.

I have learned, at length, that I am indebted for Twining's Aristotle to a relation of mine, General Cowper.

Pardon me that I quit you so soon. It is not willingly; but I have compassion on your poor messenger.

Adieu, my dear madam, and believe me, with Mrs. Unwin's best compliments,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR, The Lodge, May 20, 1789.

FINDING myself, between twelve and one, at the end of the seventeenth book of the Odyssey, I give the interval between the present moment and the time of walking to you. If I write letters before I sit down to Homer, I feel my spirits too flat for poetry; and too flat for letter-writing, if I address myself to Homer first; but the last I choose as the least evil, because my friends will pardon my dullness, but the public will not.

I had been some days uneasy on your account, when yours arrived. We should have rejoiced to have seen you, would your engagements have permitted: but in the autumn I hope, if not before, we shall have the pleasure to receive you. At what time we may expect Lady Hesketh, at present I know not; but imagine that at any time after the month of June you will be

sure to find her with us, which I mention, knowing that to meet you will add a relish to all the pleasures she can find at Weston.

When I wrote those lines on the Queen's visit, I thought I had performed well; but it belongs to me, as I have told you before, to dislike whatever I write when it has been written a month. The performance was therefore sinking in my esteem, when your approbation of it, arriving in good time, buoyed it up again. It will now keep possession of the place it holds in my good opinion, because it has been favoured with yours; and a copy will certainly be at your service, whenever you choose to have one.

Nothing is more certain, than that when I wrote the line,

> God made the country, and man made the town,

I had not the least recollection of that very similar one, which you quote from Hawkins Browne. It convinces me that critics, (and none more than Warton, in his notes on Milton's minor poems,) have often charged authors with borrowing what they drew from their own fund. Browne was an entertaining companion when he had drunk his bottle, but not before; this proved a snare to him, and he would sometimes drink too much; but I know not that he was chargeable with any other irregularities. He had those among his intimates who would not have been such had he been otherwise viciously inclined;—the Duncombes, in particular, father and son, who were of unblemished morals.

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.

DEAREST MADAM, Weston, May 30, 1789.

MANY thanks for your kind and valuable dispatches, none of which, except your letter, I have yet had time to read; for true it is, and a sad truth too, that I was in bed when your messenger arrived. He waits only for my answer, for which reason I answer as speedily as I can.

I am glad if my poetical packet pleased you. Those stanzas on the Queen's visit were presented some time since, by Miss Goldsworthy, to the Princess Augusta, who has probably given them to the Queen; but of their reception I have heard nothing. I gratified myself by complimenting two sovereigns whom I love and honour; and that gratification will be my reward. It would, indeed, be unreasonable to expect that persons who keep a Laureate in constant pay, should have either praise or emolument to spare for every volunteer scribbler who may choose to make them his subject.

Mrs. Unwin, who is much obliged to you for your enquiries, is but little better since I wrote last. No person ever recovered more imperceptibly; yet certain it is that she does recover. I am persuaded myself that, though it was not suspected at the time, the thigh bone was longitudinally fractured, and she is of my opinion. Much time is requisite to the restoration of a bone so injured, and nothing can be done to expedite the cure. My mother-in-law broke her leg bone in the same manner, and was long a cripple. The only comfort in the present case is, that had the bone been broken transversely, the consequences must probably have been mortal.

I will take the greatest care of the papers with which you have entrusted me, and will return them by the next opportunity. It is very unfortunate that the people of Bedford should choose to have the small-pox, just at the season when it would be sure to prevent our meeting. God only knows, madam, when we shall meet, or whether at all in this world; but certain it is, that whether we meet or not,

I am most truly yours,

W. C.

Mrs. Unwin presents her best respects, and I beg you will make mine to Mr. King.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, The Lodge, June 5, 1789.

I AM going to give you a deal of trouble, but London folks must be content to be troubled by country folks; for in London only can our strange necessities be supplied. You must buy for me, if you please, a cuckoo clock; and now I will tell you where they are sold, which, Londoner as you are, it is possible you may not know. They are sold, I am informed, at more houses than one, in that narrow part of Holborn which leads into Broad St. Giles's. It seems they are well-going clocks, and cheap, which are the two best recommendations of any clock. They are made in Germany, and such numbers of them are annually imported, that they are become even a considerable article of commerce.

I return you many thanks for Boswell's Tour. I read it to Mrs. Unwin after supper, and we find it

amusing. There is much trash in it, as there must always be in every narrative that relates indiscriminately all that passed. But now and then the Doctor speaks like an oracle, and that makes amends for all. Sir John was a coxcomb, and Boswell is not less a coxcomb, though of another kind. I fancy Johnson made coxcombs of all his friends, and they in return made him a coxcomb; for, with reverence be it spoken, such he certainly was, and flattered as he was, he was sure to be so.

Thanks for your invitation to London,—but unless London can come to me, I fear we shall never meet. I was sure that you would love my friend, when you should once be well acquainted with him; and equally sure that he would take kindly to you.

Now for Homer.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, June 6, 1789.

I KNOW not, my dearest coz, that I have any thing to trouble thee about, save half a dozen tooth-brushes. Mrs. Unwin will be much obliged to thee also for a black summer cloak *untrimmed*, because Hannah is making a trimming for it. Two of the brushes above-said must be for inside *scurryfunging*, viz. they must be *hooked*. These wants satisfied, we have no other commissions with which to charge thee. The stiffer the brushes, the better.

My friend Walter Bagot, to whom I sent a copy of the Illumination verses, objected as thou didst to the

concluding stanzas; but I could not alter them on the credit of his judgement only;—when thine and that of thy friends had confirmed it, I then thought it prudent to surrender my own, and am now glad that I did, for I think the copy much mended, and mended almost as much by the omission of the others.

I have the satisfaction to find that the copy of which Miss Stapleton is the subject, gratified much both her and her father. She wrote to Mrs. Frog lately, and told her, among other handsome things that she said on the occasion, that she showed them with not a little pride to all her acquaintance who could *read* and had *sense* to understand them. She expressed herself thus, because it happened that a young gentleman who could *not read*, being commissioned to read them at her father's table, he not only murdered them by his bad delivery, but feloniously attempted to maim them likewise by a puny criticism on one of the lines. It was, however, sufficiently vindicated by the company, and the young sprig of a critic, severely rallied by Mr. Stapleton, was made to blush for his misemployed sagacity. Mrs. Frog told me she never saw her friend so angry in her life.

I have composed since a small poem on a hideous subject, with which the Gentleman's Magazine for April furnished me;—it is nevertheless a true one, hideous as it is. Mr. Bull and Mr. Greatheed both have seen the man on whose death it is written, and know that he died as there related. It is entitled The Cockfighter's Garland. Expecting to see thee soon, I shall not send it.

Running over what I have written, I feel that I should blush to send it to any but thyself. Another would charge me with being impelled by a vanity from which my conscience sets me clear, to speak so much of myself and my verses as I do. But I thus speak to none but thee, nor to thee do I thus speak from any such motives. I egotize in my letters to thee, not because I am of much importance to myself, but because to thee, both *Ego* and all that *Ego* does, is interesting. God doth know that when I labour most to excel as a poet, I do it under such mortifying impressions of the vanity of all human fame and glory, however acquired, that I wonder I can write at all.

Mr. Frog made his wife a short visit in his way from Bucklands to London, and on Thursday they dined with us,—the only dinner they have had here these seven months. He is gone again, and expects to be detained from home about a fortnight longer. In July they go to Tunbridge, and thence to Margate; after which they make another jaunt, I know not whither with certainty, but I think to Bucklands. Thus we are likely to be pretty much a trio, and to have none but ourselves to depend on for our entertainment. Well, we can fadge. On Monday I shall dine at Newport with Mr. Greatheed; he comes to give me a cast thither in his chaise and one. The artist who is to copy my phiz is expected in August. This falls out well, because you, I hope, will be here, who will settle what sort of a head he shall give me better than any body. I am now going to revise the last half of the eighteenth book of the Odyssey, and to-morrow

shall begin the nineteenth. Mrs. Unwin makes her best compliments, and I am,

Ever thine,

WM. COWPER.

P. S. Mrs. U. recollects that when you were here, and we had a dinner to get for the Frogs, you regretted that *sponge biscuits*, (so she thinks you called them,) were not to be had. Perhaps you would like to bring a small parcel of that commodity with you.

LADY HESKETH, NEW NORFOLK STREET, GROSVENOR SQUARE, LONDON.

The Lodge, June 13, 1789.

I STEAL a few moments from the old Grecian, my dear cousin, just to hint to you, in the way of admonition, that when this reaches your fair hands the half of June will be over. You will know without my telling you to what subject in particular this gentle insinuation applies.

At present we boast not much either of bright suns or genial airs. In this wonderful climate we have often sunless summers and clear-shining winters; but when once we meet we will not trouble ourselves about the weather.

* * * * * * *

I dined, as I told you I should, at Newport last Monday, and had an agreeable day. Mr. Greatheed came for me, and carried me thither in a single-horsed chaise almost as high as a phaeton. At first I was

rather alarmed at such an extraordinary elevation, having never been accustomed to ride in such triumphant sort; but having learned soon after I mounted that Mrs. Greatheed frequently committed herself to it, I felt it a shame to fear that which has no terrors for a lady. I think them nevertheless dangerous;—should the horse fall, woe to the necks of the riders!

* * * * * * *

Poor Mrs. Frog is still a widow, and I fear that her husband and she will receive no other recompense of their separation than a disappointment. The Chancellor is no friend to the measure which the Catholics are now pressing in Parliament.

* * * * * * *

Mrs. Hill's turkey is become the father of fifteen beautiful children;—one of them white, and two or three of them buff. If you see her, pray tell her how much she has enriched us.

I am, my dearest coz, with Mrs. Unwin's best affections,

Ever thine,

WM. COWPER.

P. S. Many thanks for the waistcoats. I have received a present of a silk one, together with a silver snuff-box, from a person who lays me under an unpleasant restraint, forbidding me absolutely to say from whom. Mrs. U. has a snuff-box also *from the same* quarter.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, June 16, 1789.

You will naturally suppose that the letter in which you announced your marriage occasioned me some concern, though in my answer I had the wisdom to conceal it. The account you gave me of the object of your choice was such as left me at liberty to form conjectures not very comfortable to myself, if my friendship for you were indeed sincere. I have since however been sufficiently consoled. Your brother Chester has informed me, that you have married not only one of the most agreeable, but one of the most accomplished women in the kingdom. It is an old maxim that it is better to exceed expectation than to disappoint it, and with this maxim in your view it was, no doubt, that you dwelt only on circumstances of disadvantage, and would not treat me with a recital of others which abundantly overweigh them. I now congratulate not you only, but myself, and truly rejoice that my friend has chosen for his fellow-traveller through the remaining stages of his journey, a companion who will do honour to his discernment, and make his way, so far as it can depend on a wife to do so, pleasant to the last.

My verses on the Queen's visit to London either have been printed, or soon will be, in the World. The finishing to which you objected I have altered, and have substituted two new stanzas instead of it. Two others also I have struck out, another critic having objected to *them*. I think I am a very tractable sort of a poet. Most of my fraternity would as soon

shorten the noses of their children because they were said to be too long, as thus dock their compositions in compliance with the opinion of others. I beg that when my life shall be written hereafter, my authorship's ductability of temper may not be forgotten.

I am, my dear friend! ever yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

AMICO MIO, The Lodge, June 20, 1789.

I AM truly sorry that it must be so long before we can have an opportunity to meet. My cousin, in her last letter but one, inspired me with other expectations, expressing a purpose, if the matter could be so contrived, of bringing you with her; I was willing to believe that you had consulted together on the subject, and found it feasible. A month was formerly a trifle in my account; but at my present age I give it all its importance, and grudge that so many months should yet pass, in which I have not even a glimpse of those I love, and of whom, the course of nature considered, I must ere long take leave for ever:—but I shall live till August.

Many thanks for the cuckoo, which arrived perfectly safe, and goes well, to the amusement and amazement of all who hear it. Hannah lies awake to hear it, and I am not sure that we have not others in the house that admire his music as much as she.

Having read both Hawkins and Boswell, I now think myself almost as much a master of Johnson's character, as if I had known him personally, and can-

not but regret *that our bards of other times* found no such biographers as these. They have both been ridiculed, and the wits have had their laugh; but such a history of Milton or Shakespeare, as they have given of Johnson—O how desirable!

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, June 23, 1789.

ONE more scrap of a letter, my dearest coz, and then I hope it will be long before I shall have occasion to epistolize thee again. I rejoice that the day is at last fixed for your coming, and woe be to any, whether male or female, who shall now interpose to hinder it! We have had much foul weather, and the weather is still foul. This is *tant mieux*. It will be fair when you arrive, and the country the pleasanter for the deluge that has been poured down upon it. My laurels already give proof of the benefit they have received. A few days ago they were in appearance lifeless, but they are now almost covered with young leaves, save and except those under your parlour-window, which, I am sorry to say, are still but melancholy figures. Why they should have fared worse than the rest I am at a loss to imagine, for they certainly have been more sheltered, and have a better aspect.

Mr. Frog has just passed by on his return to London. I dined with him yesterday. Mrs. Unwin being no longer able to walk in pattens or clogs, was prevented by the dirt. The Catholic application to Par-

liament, I find, is not likely to speed at present. The Bishop of London is not favourable to it; he leads all the other Bishops, and the Bishops all together lead Mr. Pitt. The Chancellor, on the other hand, is much their friend. But whether Chancellor alone will be able hereafter to preponderate against such a weight of episcopacy seems doubtful.

I learn from the Frogs that I am somewhat formidable to Mrs. B. Chester, and that she trembles at the thought of encountering a man of my extraordinary consequence. I am glad of this. Nothing could so effectually relieve me from the fears that I should otherwise have of her. Let her not detain you longer than the appointed Tuesday, and I will promise to frighten her as little as possible.

Thanks for the pains thou hast taken to promulgate my Illumination verses, especially that thou didst take so sure a way to mortify the printer of the *World*. I dare say the rogue is now ready to hang himself. It would be a pleasant thing to see him the subject of an article in his own paper.—"The cause of this rash action, we understand, was the concern he felt at having neglected to print those incomparable stanzas by the author of the Task, which appeared lately in the Times."—Thus would complete justice be done to my violated importance, and an example held up in the eyes of all such vermin to deter them from taking such liberty with me in future.

Adieu, my dear. The bells are effectually muffled, and you have no salute to fear from the steeple. Lady Spencer is doubtless a respectable patroness, and I can

have no objection to her, should you persist in declining yourself the honour that I designed you. But to tell you the truth, I had rather have seen your name prefixed to my labours than even hers or any body's.

We truly rejoice in the King's complete restoration, a restoration as worthy to be remembered as any that has ever been commemorated in this country. The jaunt he proposes will probably be of great use to him, and, to the mortification of some enemies that he has in his own household, prove the means of lengthening his reign and our prosperity.

God give thee a good journey,—so prays Mrs. Unwin, and so, my dear cousin,

Ever yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON.

July 18, 1789.

MANY thanks, my dear madam, for your extract from George's letter. I retain but little Italian, yet that little was so forcibly mustered by the consciousness that I was myself the subject, that I presently became master of it. I have always said that George is a poet, and I am never in his company but I discover proofs of it; and the delicate address by which he has managed his complimentary mention of me, convinces me of it still more than ever. Here are a thousand poets of us, who have impudence enough to write for the public; but amongst the modest men who are by diffidence restrained from such an enterprise are those who would eclipse us all. I wish that George would

make the experiment. I would bind on his laurels with my own hand.

Your gardener has gone after his wife, but having neglected to take his lyre, *alias* fiddle, with him, has not yet brought home his Eurydice. Your clock in the hall has stopped, and (strange to tell!) it stopped at sight of the watch-maker; for he only looked at it, and it has been motionless ever since. Mr. Gregson is gone, and the Hall is a desolation. Pray don't think any place pleasant that you may find in your rambles, that we may see you the sooner. Your aviary is all in good health. I pass it every day, and often enquire at the lattice; the inhabitants of it send their duty, and wish for your return. I took notice of the inscription on your seal, and had we an artist here capable of furnishing me with another, you should read on mine, "*Encore une lettre.*"

Adieu,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, July 23, 1789.

You do well, my dear sir, to improve your opportunity; to speak in the rural phrase, this is your sowing time, and the sheaves you look for can never be yours unless you make that use of it. The colour of our whole life is generally such as the three or four first years in which we are our own masters, make it. Then it is that we may be said to shape our own destiny, and to treasure up for ourselves a series of future successes or disappointments. Had I employed my

time as wisely as you, in a situation very similar to yours, I had never been a poet perhaps, but I might by this time have acquired a character of more importance in society; and a situation in which my friends would have been better pleased to see me. But three years misspent in an attorney's office were almost of course followed by several more equally misspent in the Temple, and the consequence has been, as the Italian epitaph says, "*Sto qui.*"—The only use I can make of myself now, at least the best, is to serve *in terrorem* to others, when occasion may happen to offer, that they may escape (so far as my admonitions can have any weight with them,) my folly and my fate. When you feel yourself tempted to relax a little of the strictness of your present discipline, and to indulge in amusement incompatible with your future interests, think on your friend at Weston.

Having said this, I shall next, with my whole heart, invite you hither, and assure you that I look forward to approaching August with great pleasure, because it promises me your company. After a little time, (which we shall wish longer,) spent with us, you will return invigorated to your studies, and pursue them with the more advantage. In the mean time you have lost little, in point of season, by being confined to London. Incessant rains and meadows under water, have given to the summer the air of winter, and the country has been deprived of half its beauties.

It is time to tell you that we are well, and often make you our subject. This is the third meeting that my cousin and we have had in this country; and a

great instance of good fortune I account it in such a world as this, to have expected such a pleasure thrice without being once disappointed. Add to this wonder as soon as you can by making yourself of the party.

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, Weston, Aug. 1, 1789.

THE post brings me no letters that do not grumble at my silence. Had not you, therefore, taken me to task as roundly as others, I should have concluded you, perhaps, more indifferent to my epistles than the rest of my correspondents; of whom one says—"I shall be glad when you have finished Homer; then possibly you will find a little leisure for an old friend." Another says—"I don't choose to be neglected, unless you equally neglect every one else." Thus I hear of it with both ears, and shall till I appear in the shape of two great quarto volumes, the composition of which, I confess, engrosses me to a degree that gives my friends, to whom I feel myself much obliged for their anxiety to hear from me, but too much reason to complain. Johnson told Mr. Martyn the truth; but your inference from that truth is not altogether so just as most of your conclusions are. Instead of finding myself the more at leisure because my long labour draws to a close, I find myself the more occupied. As when a horse approaches the goal, he does not, unless he be jaded, slacken his pace, but quickens it: even so it

fares with me. The end is in view; I seem almost to have reached the mark; and the nearness of it inspires me with fresh alacrity. But, be it known to you that I have still two books of the Odyssey before me, and, when they are finished, shall have almost the whole eight-and-forty to revise. Judge then my dear Madam, if it is yet time for me to play, or to gratify myself with scribbling to those I love. No. It is still necessary that waking I should be all absorpt in Homer, and that sleeping I should dream of nothing else.

I am a great lover of good paintings, but no connoisseur, having never had an opportunity to become one. In the last forty years of my life, I have hardly seen six pictures that were worth looking at; for I was never a frequenter of auctions, having never had any spare money in my pocket; and the public exhibitions of them in London had hardly taken place when I left it. My cousin, who is with us, saw the gentleman whose pieces you mention, on the top of a scaffold, copying a famous picture in the Vatican. She has seen some of his performances, and much admires them.

You have had a great loss, and a loss that admits of no consolation, except such as will naturally suggest itself to *you;* such, I mean, as the Scripture furnishes. We must all leave, or be left; and it is the circumstance of all others that makes long life the least desirable, that others go while we stay,—till at last we find ourselves alone, like a tree on a hill-top.

Accept, my dear Madam, mine and Mrs. Unwin's

best compliments to yourself and Mr. King, and believe me however unfrequent in telling you that I am so,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Aug. 8, 1789.

COME when you will, or when you can, you cannot come at a wrong time, but we shall expect you on the day mentioned.

If you have any book that you think will make pleasant evening reading, bring it with you. I now read Mrs. Piozzi's Travels to the ladies after supper, and shall probably have finished them before we shall have the pleasure of seeing you. It is the fashion, I understand, to condemn them. But we who make books ourselves are more merciful to book-makers. I would that every fastidious judge of authors were himself obliged to write; there goes more to the composition of a volume than many critics imagine. I have often wondered that the same poet who wrote the Dunciad should have written these lines,

> The mercy I to others show,
> That mercy show to me.

Alas! for Pope, if the mercy he showed to others was the measure of the mercy he received! he was the less pardonable too, because experienced in all the difficulties of composition.

I scratch this between dinner and tea; a time when I cannot write much without disordering my noddle, and bringing a flush into my face. You will excuse me therefore if, through respect for the two important considerations of health and beauty, I conclude myself,

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Aug. 16, 1789.

MRS. NEWTON and you are both kind and just in believing that I do not love you less when I am long silent. Perhaps a friend of mine, who wishes me to have him always in my thoughts, is never so effectually possessed of the accomplishment of that wish, as when I have been long his debtor; for *then* I think of him not only every day, but day and night, and all day long. But I confess at the same time, that my thoughts of you will be more pleasant to myself when I shall have exonerated my conscience by giving you the letter so long your due. Therefore, here it comes; —little worth your having; but payment, such as it is, that you have a right to expect, and that is essential to my own tranquillity.

That the Iliad and the Odyssey should have proved the occasion of my suspending my correspondence with you, is a proof how little we foresee the consequences of what we publish. Homer, I dare say, hardly at all suspected that at the fag-end of time two personages would appear, the one ycleped Sir Newton, and the

other Sir Cowper, who loving each other heartily, would nevertheless suffer the pains of an interrupted intercourse, his poems the cause. So, however, it has happened; and though it would not, I suppose, extort from the old bard a single sigh, if he knew it, yet to me it suggests the serious reflection above mentioned. An author by profession had need narrowly to watch his pen, lest a line should escape it which by possibility may do mischief, when he has been long dead and buried. What we have done, when we have written a book, will never be known till the day of judgement: then the account will be liquidated, and all the good that it has occasioned, and all the evil, will witness either for or against us.

I am now in the last book of the Odyssey, yet have still, I suppose, half a year's work before me. The accurate revisal of two such voluminous poems can hardly cost me less. I rejoice, however, that the goal is in prospect; for though it has cost me years to run this race, it is only now that I begin to have a glimpse of it. That I shall never receive any proportionable pecuniary recompense for my long labours, is pretty certain; and as to any fame that I may possibly gain by it, *that* is a commodity that daily sinks in value, in measure as the consummation of all things approaches. In the day when the lion shall dandle the kid, and a little child shall lead them, the world will have lost all relish for the fabulous legends of antiquity, and Homer and his translator may budge off the stage together.

The ladies are coming down, and breakfast is at hand. Should I throw aside my letter unfinished, it is not probable that I shall be able to send it by this

opportunity. Therefore that you may not wait longer for that for which you have waited too long already, I will only add that I always love and value you both as much as you can possibly wish, and that I am, with Mrs. Unwin's affectionate remembrances, my dear friend, ever yours,

WM. COWPER.

You know that Lady Hesketh is with us; you have had her compliments before, and I send them now, because she would bid me, if she knew that I write to you. We have a snug summer. Our neighbours are out on a ramble, and we have all their pleasant places to ourselves. Not that their return in September will interrupt our pleasures, for they are always kind and agreeable, but it will give them a different cast.

Pray remember me to Mr. Bacon.

TO CLOTWORTHY ROWLEY, ESQ.

Weston Underwood, near Olney, Bucks.

MY DEAR FRIEND, last day of August.

I HAVE been often in pain about you, and have anxiously mentioned you to Mrs. Unwin several times, fearing lest illness or some evil had befallen you. Your letter, enclosing a bill of exchange for sixteen guineas, has rambled eleven days in quest of me; neither can I easily conjecture by what means it reached me at last, having set off with a wrong direction, as the date of this will inform you. I cannot

sufficiently express my sense of your kindness. Labouring as you do in my cause, you give me unequivocal proofs of a friendship superior to the influence of time, and to which I seem to make but a cold return, at least an inadequate one, when I only thank you for it. But what can I do more? Poets are seldom good for any thing except in rhyme. It is however true that I both love and honour you for your fidelity and kindness.

I have from the beginning been aware that my translation of Homer will have much prejudice to encounter, more perhaps than would have attended any other work that I could possibly have undertaken. I confess it a bold enterprise; not because Pope has succeeded in it, for he certainly has not; but because he is by thousands ignorantly supposed to have succeeded, and because it may perhaps be impossible to render justice to the original in our language. All I can say is, that I will do my best, and of one thing at least I will assure you, that according to all I have seen or heard of other translations of the same author, none of them have in any respect at all resembled mine. Whether mine shall be found to differ to a good purpose, *probandum est.*

In answer to your question when I go to press? I reply, when my bookseller pleases. I am now finishing the twenty-third book of the Iliad, and being advanced so far, could easily keep before the printers were they to begin to-morrow. But Johnson recommends it to me by no means to print till the whole is finished, alleging for his reason that the printers

cannot possibly plan the work till they shall have the whole before them. And my most intelligent friends advise me to be determined by Johnson, who has universally the character of a sensible and honest man.

I rejoice much in the account you give me of your domestic happiness. May it continue, and, if possible, increase! You may safely present my love to Miss Rowley. A present of that sort from a man old enough to be her father, can do her no harm,—at least at this distance. Were we nearer to each other, perhaps the approach might not be altogether so safe for me.

My uncle, as you observe, died full of years, but not rich. The profits of the very lucrative office which he held so long, were not his, but General Cowper's, whose interest in them determined on the death of Ashley. A gold repeater and a tooth-pick case are all that I have gained by the loss of a relation, whom all who knew him, most highly loved and valued, and whose like I shall not presently see again.

Mr. Madan lives at Epsom, since the publication of his Thelyphthora, little noticed I believe either by our family or his former friends. He and I have no correspondence. He neither has nor wants preferment; his paternal estate, as I have heard, bringing him in between four and five thousand per annum. I pity the man, and time was when I felt much abhorrence of his book; but it is now a dead thing, out of mind, and no longer a subject either of liking or aversion.

I have scribbled in haste, being desirous that you may have the earliest possible advice of the safe, though late arrival of yours. Nothing could have been more

welcome to me than either your son William or any of yours. Would I could see you all at the lake side. I am happy that you are in health. May God keep you so. Except scratching now and then a letter as fast as I can do, I do nothing but translate.

Ever yours, my dearest friend,

WM. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Sept. 24, 1789.

You left us exactly at the wrong time. Had you stayed till now, you would have had the pleasure of hearing even my cousin say—"I am cold."—And the still greater pleasure of being warm yourself; for I have had a fire in the study ever since you went. It is the fault of our summers, that they are hardly ever warm or cold enough. Were they warmer, we should not want a fire; and were they colder, we should have one.

I have twice seen and conversed with Mr. Jekyll. He is witty, intelligent, and agreeable beyond the common measure of men who are so. But it is the constant effect of a spirit of party to make those hateful to each other, who are truly amiable in themselves.

Beau sends his love; he was melancholy the whole day after your departure.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Oct. 4, 1789.

THE hamper is come, and come safe; and the contents I can affirm on my own knowledge are excellent. It chanced that another hamper and a box came by the same conveyance, all which I unpacked and expounded in the hall; my cousin sitting, mean time, on the stairs, spectatress of the business. We diverted ourselves with imagining the manner in which Homer would have described the scene. Detailed in his circumstantial way, it would have furnished materials for a paragraph of considerable length in an Odyssey.

> The straw-stuff'd hamper with his ruthless steel
> He open'd, cutting sheer the' inserted cords,
> Which bound the lid and lip secure. Forth came
> The rustling package first, bright straw of wheat,
> Or oats, or barley; next a bottle green
> Throat-full, clear spirits the contents, distill'd
> Drop after drop odorous, by the art
> Of the fair mother of his friend—the Rose.

And so on.

I should rejoice to be the hero of such a tale in the hands of Homer.

You will remember, I trust, that when the state of your health or spirits calls for rural walks and fresh air, you have always a retreat at Weston.

We are all well, all love you, down to the very dog; and shall be glad to hear that you have exchanged languor for alacrity, and the debility that you mention, for indefatigable vigour.

Mr. Throckmorton has made me a handsome present; Villoison's edition of the Iliad, elegantly bound by Edwards. If I live long enough, by the contributions of my friends I shall once more be possessed of a library.

Adieu,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, Dec. 13, 1789.

UNABLE to resist the temptation of a basket, I take the opportunity that it affords, to send you a hasty and short scribblement, though at an undue hour; for I write after breakfast, having overslept my usual time of rising. Homer will pardon me a trespass so seldom committed, and by which he will be but little a loser.

In the first place I thank thee heartily, that with the patience and the perseverance of an angler, in ponds *where fish are*, thou hast at length contrived to hook that great gudgeon mentioned in thy last. I do not think at the same time that thou wast guilty of any flattery in thy management of the matter; for to tell such a man that the absence of his name from my list of subscribers would have been a dishonour to my book, considering especially what book it is, was telling him the truth. And now I will speak a proud word. He will be glad when he gets the book that he did subscribe to it; and this proud word I speak almost as much with a view to thy encouragement as

to gratify my own vanity, and self-complacence. Authors are not often good judges of themselves; but thou must know that I am an exception.

Again I thank thee for wine,—for two dozen of excellent Madeira, not a bottle of which was broken by the way. Impatient to taste it, though it was hardly allowing it a fair trial, I opened a bottle of it last night, and found it very superior to my last stock of that commodity, which I doubt not had been kept too long. Thanks also for newspapers, which I forgot like a beast to acknowledge in my last!

I sincerely rejoice with thee that thou hast succeeded in procuring a midshipmanship (there's a word for you!) for the poor young man in question. May he live to command where he now serves!

We should sooner have had a daily post could the people of Olney have settled the affair among themselves. Better now than never. I must not forget to beg that you make my best compliments to the lady, whoever she is, to whom I am indebted for a subscription so handsomely given.

Our poor neighbours have both been indisposed, Mrs. Frog with a terrible cold, from which she is just recovered after a fortnight's illness, and Mr. Frog with his first fit of the gout, which seized him about a week since by the foot, and which confines him still.

As to ourselves we are much in *statû quo*, except that Mrs. U. has a slight nervous fever, accompanied with head-aches, which she had not when you were here. She drinks lemonade, and finds it her best remedy.

Received from my master, on account current with Lady Hesketh, the sum of—one kiss on my forehead. Witness my paw,

Beau × his mark.

Mrs. U. sends her affectionate compliments.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Dec. 18, 1789.

THE present appears to me a wonderful period in the history of mankind. That nations so long contentedly slaves should on a sudden become enamoured of liberty, and understand, as suddenly, their own natural right to it, feeling themselves at the same time inspired with resolution to assert it, seems difficult to account for from natural causes. With respect to the final issue of all this, I can only say, that if, having discovered the value of liberty, they should next discover the value of peace, and lastly the value of the word of God, they will be happier than they ever were since the rebellion of the first pair, and as happy as it is possible they should be in the present life.

Most sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR WALTER,

I KNOW that you are too reasonable a man to expect any thing like punctuality of correspondence from a translator of Homer, especially from one who is a doer also of many other things at the same time; for I labour hard not only to acquire a little fame for myself, but to win it also for others, men of whom I know nothing, not even their names, who send me their poetry, that by translating it out of prose into verse, I may make it more like poetry than it was. Having heard all this, you will feel yourself not only inclined to pardon my long silence, but to pity me also for the cause of it. You may if you please believe likewise, for it is true, that I have a faculty of remembering my friends even when I do not write to them, and of loving them not one jot the less, though I leave them to starve for want of a letter from me. And now I think you have an apology both as to style, matter, and manner, altogether unexceptionable.

Why is the winter like a backbiter? Because Solomon says that a backbiter separates between chief friends, and so does the winter; to this dirty season it is owing, that I see nothing of the valuable Chesters, whom indeed I see less at all times than serves at all to content me. I hear of them indeed occasionally from my neighbours at the Hall, but even of that comfort I have lately enjoyed less than usual, Mr. Throckmorton having been hindered by his first fit of the gout from his usual visits to Chicheley. The gout however has not prevented his making me a handsome present

of a folio edition of the Iliad, published about a year since at Venice, by a literato, who calls himself Villoison. It is possible that you have seen it, and that if you have it not yourself, it has at least found its way to Lord Bagot's library. If neither should be the case, when I write next, (for sooner or later I shall certainly write to you again if I live,) I will send you some pretty stories out of his Prolegomena, which will make your hair stand on end, as mine has stood on end already, they so horribly affect, in point of authenticity, the credit of the works of the immortal Homer.

Wishing you and Mrs. Bagot all the happiness that a new year can possibly bring with it, I remain with Mrs. Unwin's best respects, yours, my dear friend, with all sincerity,

W. C.

My paper mourns for the death of Lord Cowper, my valuable cousin, and much my benefactor.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM a terrible creature for not writing sooner, but the old excuse must serve, at least I will not occupy paper with the addition of others unless you should insist on it, in which case I can assure you that I have them ready. Now to business.

From Villoison I learn that it was the avowed opinion and persuasion of Callimachus, (whose hymns

we both studied at Westminster,) that Homer was very imperfectly understood even in his day: that his admirers, deceived by the perspicuity of his style, fancied themselves masters of his meaning, when in truth they knew little about it.

Now we know that Callimachus, as I have hinted, was himself a poet, and a good one; he was also esteemed a good critic: he almost, if not actually, adored Homer, and imitated him as nearly as he could.

What shall we say to this? I will tell you what I say to it. Callimachus meant, and he could mean nothing more by this assertion, than that the poems of Homer were in fact an allegory; that under the obvious import of his stories lay concealed a mystic sense, sometimes philosophical, sometimes religious, sometimes moral,—and that the generality either wanted penetration or industry, or had not been properly qualified by their studies, to discover it. This I can readily believe, for I am myself an ignoramus in these points, and except here and there, discern nothing more than the letter. But if Callimachus will tell me that even of *that* I am ignorant, I hope soon by two great volumes to convince him of the contrary.

I learn also from the same Villoison, that Pisistratus, who was a sort of Mecænas in Athens, where he gave great encouragement to literature, and built and furnished a public library, regretting that there was no complete copy of Homer's works in the world, resolved to make one. For this purpose he advertised rewards in all the newspapers to those, who, being possessed *memoriter* of any part or parcels of the poems of that

bard, would resort to his house, and repeat them to his secretaries, that they might write them. Now it happened that more were desirous of the reward than qualified to deserve it. The consequence was that the nonqualified persons having, many of them, a pretty knack at versification, imposed on the generous Athenian most egregiously, giving him instead of Homer's verses, which they had not to give, verses of their own invention. He, good creature, suspecting no such fraud, took them all for gospel, and entered them into his volume accordingly.

Now let *him* believe the story who can. That Homer's works were in this manner corrected, I *can* believe; but that a learned Athenian could be so imposed upon, with sufficient means of detection at hand, I *cannot*. Would he not be on his guard? Would not a difference of style and manner have occurred? Would not that difference have excited a suspicion? Would not that suspicion have led to enquiry? and would not that enquiry have issued in detection? For how easy was it in the multitude of Homer-conners to find two, ten, twenty, possessed of the questionable passage, and by confronting them with the impudent impostor, to convict him. *Abeas ergo in malam rem cum istis tuis hallucinationibus, Villoisone!*

Faithfully yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR, The Lodge, Jan. 3, 1790.

I HAVE been long silent, but you have had the charity, I hope and believe, not to ascribe my silence to a wrong cause. The truth is I have been too busy to write to any body, having been obliged to give my early mornings to the revisal and correction of a little volume of Hymns for Children, written by I know not whom. This task I finished but yesterday, and while it was in hand wrote only to my cousin, and to her rarely. From her, however, I knew that you would hear of my well being, which made me less anxious about my debts to you, than I could have been otherwise.

I am almost the only person at Weston, known to you, who have enjoyed tolerable health this winter. In your next letter give us some account of your own state of health, for I have had many anxieties about you. The winter has been mild; but our winters are in general such that when a friend leaves us in the beginning of that season, I always feel in my heart a *perhaps* importing that we have possibly met for the last time, and that the robins may whistle on the grave of one of us before the return of summer.

I am still thrumming Homer's lyre; that is to say, I am still employed in my last revisal; and to give you some idea of the intenseness of my toils, I will inform you that it cost me all the morning yesterday, and all the evening, to translate a single simile to my mind. The transitions from one member of the subject to another, though easy and natural in the Greek, turn out often so intolerably awkward in an English ver-

sion, that almost endless labour, and no little address, are requisite to give them grace and elegance. I forget if I told you that your German Clavis has been of considerable use to me. I am indebted to it for a right understanding of the manner in which Achilles prepared pork, mutton, and goat's flesh, for the entertainment of his friends, in the night when they came deputed by Agamemnon to negotiate a reconciliation: a passage of which nobody in the world is perfectly master, myself only and Schaulfelbergerus excepted, nor ever was, except when Greek was a *live* language.

I do not know whether my cousin has told you or not how I brag in my letters to her concerning my Translation; perhaps her modesty feels more for me than mine for myself, and she would blush to let even you know the degree of my self-conceit on that subject. I will tell you, however, expressing myself as decently as vanity will permit, that it has undergone such a change for the better in this last revisal, that I have much warmer hopes of success than formerly.

Yours,

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, Weston Underwood, Jan. 4, 1790.

YOUR long silence has occasioned me to have a thousand anxious thoughts about you. So long it has been, that whether I now write to a Mrs. King at present on earth, or already in heaven, I know not. I have friends whose silence troubles me less, though I have known them longer; because, if I hear not from

themselves, I yet learn from others that they are still living, and likely to live. But if your letters cease to bring me news of your welfare, from whom can I gain the desirable intelligence? The birds of the air will not bring it, and third person there is none between us by whom it might be conveyed. Nothing is plain to me on this subject, but that either you are dead, or very much indisposed; or, which would affect me with perhaps as deep a concern, though of a different kind, very much offended. The latter of these suppositions I think the least probable, conscious as I am of an habitual desire to offend nobody, especially a lady, and especially a lady to whom I have many obligations. But all the three solutions above-mentioned are very uncomfortable; and if you live, and can send me one that will cause me less pain than either of them, I conjure you, by the charity and benevolence which I know influence you upon all occasions, to communicate it without delay.

It is possible, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, that you are not become perfectly indifferent to me, and to what concerns me. I will therefore add a word or two on a subject which once interested you, and which is, for that reason, worthy to be mentioned, though truly for no other—meaning myself. I am well, and have been so, (uneasiness on your account excepted,) both in mind and body, ever since I wrote to you last. I have still the same employment: Homer in the morning, and Homer in the evening, as constant as the day goes round. In the spring I hope to send the Iliad and Odyssey to the press. So much for me and my occupations. Poor Mrs. Unwin has

hitherto had but an unpleasant winter,—unpleasant as constant pain, either in her head or side, could make it. She joins me in affectionate compliments to yourself and Mr. King, and in earnest wishes that you will soon favour me with a line that shall relieve me from all my perplexities.

I am, dear madam,
Sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, Weston Underwood, Jan. 18, 1790.

THE sincerest thanks attend you, both from Mrs. Unwin and myself, for your many good things, on some of which I have already regaled with an affectionate remembrance of the giver. We have not yet opened the cocoa-nut, but it was particularly welcome. It is medicine to Mrs. Unwin, who finds it always more beneficial to her health than any thing properly called medicinal. We are truly sorry that you are so much a sufferer by the rheumatism. I also occasionally suffer by the same disorder, and in years past was much tormented by it. I can therefore pity you.

The report that informed you of enquiries made by Mrs. Unwin after a house at Huntingdon was unfounded. We have no thought of quitting Weston, unless the same Providence that led us hither, should lead us away. It is a situation perfectly agreeable to us both; and to me in particular, who write much and walk much, and consequently love silence and retirement, one of the most eligible. If it has a fault,

it is that it seems to threaten us with a certainty of never seeing you. But may we not hope that when a milder season shall have improved your health, we may yet, notwithstanding the distance, be favoured with Mr. King's and your company? A better season will likewise improve the roads, and exactly in proportion as it does so, will, in effect, lessen the interval between us. I know not if Mr. Martyn be a mathematician, but most probably he is a good one, and he can tell you that this is a proposition mathematically true, though rather paradoxical in appearance.

I am obliged to that gentleman, and *much* obliged to him, for his favourable opinion of my Translation. What parts of Homer are particularly intended by the critics, as those in which I shall probably fall short, I know not; but let me fail where I may, I shall fail nowhere through want of endeavours to avoid it. The under parts of the poems, (those I mean which are merely narrative,) I find the most difficult. These can only be supported by the diction, and on these, for that reason, I have bestowed the most abundant labour. Fine similes and fine speeches take care of themselves; but the exact process of slaying a sheep and dressing it, it is not so easy to dignify in our language, and in our measure. But I shall have the comfort, as I said, to reflect, that whatever may be hereafter laid to my charge, the sin of idleness will not;—justly, at least, it never will. In the mean time, my dear madam, I whisper to you a secret,—not to fall short of the original in every thing, is impossible.

I send you, I believe, all my pieces that you have never seen. Did I not send you Catharina? If not,

you shall have it hereafter. Mrs. Unwin, whose health is lately somewhat amended, unites with me in affectionate compliments to yourself and Mr. King.

I am, dear madam, ever, ever in haste,

Sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COZ, The Lodge, Jan. 23, 1790.

I HAD a letter yesterday from the wild boy Johnson, for whom I have conceived a great affection. It was just such a letter as I like, of the true helter-skelter kind; and though he writes a remarkably good hand, scribbled with such rapidity, that it was barely legible. He gave me a droll account of the adventures of Lord Howard's note, and of his own in pursuit of it. The poem he brought me came as from Lord Howard, with his lordship's request that I would revise it. It is in the form of a pastoral, and is entitled *The Tale of the Lute;* or, *The Beauties of Audley End.* I read it attentively; was much pleased with part of it, and part of it I equally disliked. I told him so, and in such terms as one naturally uses when there seems to be no occasion to qualify or to alleviate censure. I observed him afterwards somewhat more thoughtful and silent, but occasionally as pleasant as usual; and in Kilwick wood, where we walked the next day, the truth came out; that he was himself the author; and that Lord Howard not approving it altogether, and several friends of his own age, to whom he had shown it, differing from his lordship in opinion, and being highly

pleased with it, he had come at last to a resolution to abide by my judgement; a measure to which Lord Howard by all means advised him. He accordingly brought it, and will bring it again in the summer, when we shall lay our heads together and try to mend it.

I have lately had a letter also from Mrs. King, to whom I had written to enquire whether she were living or dead. She tells me the critics expect from my Homer every thing in some parts, and that in others I shall fall short. These are the Cambridge critics; and she has her intelligence from the botanical professor, Martyn. That gentleman in reply answers them, that I shall fall short in nothing, but shall disappoint them all. It shall be my endeavour to do so, and I am not without hope of succeeding.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 26, 1790.

My blunder in thanking thee, my dearest coz, for a basket instead of a box, seems to have had something prophetic in it; for in the evening a basket sent from you, and filled with excellent fishes actually arrived: with some of them we have compensated our neighbours for pigs presented to us in times past, and on the remainder we have chiefly subsisted ever since, nor is our stock even now exhausted. Many thanks are due to thee for this supply, and we pay them with much sincerity.

Could I blunder as I did in the instance of my Norfolk cousin, always, I mean, with such ludicrous

consequences, I should be tempted to do it daily. I have not laughed so much many a long day as at your and his droll account of the strange and unimaginable distresses that ensued on the mere omission of those two important syllables that compose the name of Johnson.

It gives me great pleasure that you are so much pleased with him, because I was much pleased with him myself. There is a simplicity in his character that charms me, and the more because it is so great a rarity. Humour he certainly has, and of the most agreeable kind. His letter to you proves it, and so does his poem; and that he has many other talents which, at present, his shyness too much suppresses, I doubt not. He has a countenance which, with all the sweetness of temper that it expresses, expresses also a mind much given to reflection, and an understanding that in due time will know how to show itself to advantage.

An indisposition from which Mrs. Frog was not sufficiently recovered to see company, and especially a stranger, was the reason of our not being invited while he was with me. She is now, however, perfectly restored; I dined there the day after he went, and dine there again to-morrow.

The young man begged that he might carry away with him eight or ten books of Homer, which he would transcribe for me, he said, at Cambridge; but I feared to trust them in that pestilent place, where some of his wild young *Trigrymates* might have snatched them from him, and have done with them I know not what.

I wish you to read Adriano, or the First of June,

and tell me what you think of it. Johnson has sent it to me for my opinion, and I must return it soon. It is rather a thin octavo, and will not occupy much of thy time.

Our friends at the Hall are all pretty well at present; but the lord of the mansion has not perfectly recovered his foot again. Mrs. Unwin still has her fever, which chiefly attacks her in the night. Beau is well, as are the two cats, and the three birds, whose cages I am going to clean, and all send their love to you.

Yours, my dear,

WM. C.

A bank note will be most commodious, and we have no fears about its safe arrival. Johnson, I believe, is tolerably well incomed. I asked him if he depended on his success in the church for a maintenance, and he answered,—No.

A rod is preparing for Miss Birch, and when Enfield's Speaker appears she will feel it.

'Tis hardly fair, Miss Birch, that you
Should steal our hearts and poems too.

I am glad that the General dealt so kindly by your protégé; he has dealt kindly too by me, having sent me a whole ream of paper.

Here endeth my postscript.

TO CLOTWORTHY ROWLEY, ESQ.

MY DEAR ROWLEY, Weston Underwood, Feb. 1, 1790.

I SHOT a few lines after you to Holyhead, according to your desire, and considering the distance of the place from London, I think it possible that you might find them there, though your letter did not reach me till the second day after your departure. But lest it should have happened otherwise, I take your letter first from an unanswered heap to tell you again what I told you there,—that I am very sensible of your kindness, and, considering our long separation, am sensible of it the more. Thou art the only one of all my Temple connexions who has, or seems to have, adverted to me since I left them seven and twenty years ago. From many others I have received numerous acts of kindness, but none from them.

I told you also in that note that I would in due time take you roundly to task for being so long silent, and for not giving me a day or two of your company while you were in England. The latter perhaps you could not, and if you could not I am so merciful that I will excuse you, much as I should have been gratified by a sight of you: but how you will make me amends for not visiting me once in a year and a half by letter, I am not able to conceive, unless by writing more frequently in future.

Alston's connexion with the Chancellor has been to him both honourable and useful, and I am glad of it. I have applied, and application has been made for me to the same source of honour and profit, but in vain. I am indeed a man not easily served, being fit for

nothing in the world but to write verses, which I do without intermission, and shall probably while I can hold a pen. But it is late in the day, and every day the motives by which men are urged to distinguish themselves, with me grow weaker. The *monumentum ære perennius* is of difficult acquisition, and, in fact, of no worth to him whose name it perpetuates. But write I must, because idleness is misery; and not to write my best would be absurd, because though posthumous fame will do me no good, I could not well bear while I lived to be called a blockhead.

This brings me naturally to answer your inquiries concerning Homer. Homer then, I hope, will go to press in the spring,—in April, perhaps, or in May. I have finished the Odyssey pretty much to my mind, and fourteen books of the Iliad. When the Iliad has had the revisal which I am now giving it, I shall give the whole one more, in which I shall find but little to do, and then throw myself into the hands of the public. On the sum of the matter, I think it probable, nay certain, that the two volumes will come out next winter.

And now, my friend, adieu! Homer calls. I rejoice that your family are well, and love them for your sake. Let me hear from you at some idle hour, if you have any such, and believe me affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, The Lodge, Feb. 2, 1790.

SHOULD Heyne's Homer appear before mine, which I hope is not probable, and should he adopt in it the opinion of Bentley, that the whole last Odyssey is spurious, I will dare to contradict both him and the Doctor. I am only in part of Bentley's mind, (if indeed his mind were such,) in this matter; and giant as he was in learning, and eagle-eyed in criticism, am persuaded, convinced, and sure, (can I be more positive?) that except from the moment when the Ithacans begin to meditate an attack on the cottage of Laertes, and thence to the end, that book is the work of Homer. From the moment aforesaid, I yield the point, or rather have never, since I had any skill in Homer, felt myself at all inclined to dispute it. But I believe perfectly at the same time that, Homer himself alone excepted, the Greek poet never existed who could have written the speeches made by the shade of Agamemnon, in which there is more insight into the human heart discovered than I ever saw in any other work, unless in Shakespeare's. I am equally disposed to fight for the whole passage that describes Laertes, and the interview between him and Ulysses. Let Bentley grant these to Homer, and I will shake hands with him as to all the rest. The battle with which the book concludes is, I think, a paltry battle, and there is a huddle in the management of it altogether unworthy of my favourite, and the favourite of all ages.

If you should happen to fall into company with Dr. Warton again, you will not, I dare say, forget to

make him my respectful compliments, and to assure him that I felt myself not a little flattered by the favourable mention he was pleased to make of me and my labours. The poet who pleases a man like him has nothing left to wish for. I am glad that you were pleased with my young cousin Johnson; he is a boy, and bashful, but has great merit in respect both of character and intellect. So far, at least, as in a week's knowledge of him I could possibly learn; he is very amiable, and very sensible, and inspired me with a warm wish to know him better.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 9, 1790.

I HAVE sent you lately scraps instead of letters, having had occasion to answer immediately on the receipt, which always happens while I am *deep in Homer*.

I knew when I recommended Johnson to you that you would find some way to serve him, and so it has happened, for notwithstanding your own apprehensions to the contrary, you have already procured him a chaplainship. This is pretty well, considering that it is an early day, and that you have but just begun to know that there is such a man under heaven. I had rather myself be patronized by a person of small interest, with a heart like yours, than by the Chancellor himself, if he did not care a farthing for me.

If I did not desire you to make my acknowledgments to Anonymous, as I believe I did not, it was

because I am not aware that I am warranted to do so. But the omission is of less consequence, because whoever he is, though he has no objection to doing the kindest things, he seems to have an aversion to the thanks they merit.

You must know that two odes composed by Horace have lately been discovered at Rome; I wanted them transcribed into the blank leaves of a little Horace of mine, and Mrs. Throckmorton performed that service for me; in a blank leaf therefore of the same book I wrote the following [1].

W. C.

TO MR. JOHNSON.

DEAR SIR, Weston, Feb. 11, 1790.

I AM very sensibly obliged by the remarks of Mr. Fuseli, and beg that you will tell him so: they afford me opportunities of improvement, which I shall not neglect. When he shall see the press-copy, he will be convinced of this; and will be convinced likewise that smart as he sometimes is, he spares me often when I have no mercy on myself. He will see almost a new translation. * * * I assure you faithfully, that whatever my faults may be, to be easily or hastily satisfied with what I have written is not one of them.

[1] The verses to Mrs. Throckmorton on her beautiful transcript of one of these spurious Odes concluded this letter.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 26, 1790.

You have set my heart at ease, my cousin, so far as you were yourself the object of its anxieties. What other troubles it feels can be cured by God alone. But you are never silent a week longer than usual, without giving an opportunity to my imagination, (ever fruitful in flowers of a sable hue,) to tease me with them day and night. London is indeed a pestilent place, as you call it, and I would, with all my heart, that thou hadst less to do with it; were you under the same roof with me, I should know you to be safe, and should never distress you with melancholy letters.

I feel myself well enough inclined to the measure you propose, and will show to your new acquaintance with all my heart a sample of my translation, but it shall not, if you please, be taken from the Odyssey. It is a poem of a gentler character than the Iliad, and as I propose to carry her by a *coup de main*, I shall employ Achilles, Agamemnon, and the two armies of Greece and Troy in my service. I will accordingly send you in the box that I received from you last night the two first books of the Iliad, for that lady's perusal; to those I have given a third revisal; for them therefore I will be answerable, and am not afraid to stake the credit of my work upon *them* with her, or with any living wight, especially one who understands the original. I do not mean that even they are finished, for I shall examine and cross-examine them yet again, and so you may tell her, but I know that they will not disgrace me; whereas it is so long since I have looked

at the Odyssey, that I know nothing at all about it. They shall set sail from Olney on Monday morning in the Diligence, and will reach you I hope in the evening. As soon as she has done with them, I shall be glad to have them again, for the time draws near when I shall want to give them the last touch.

I am delighted with Mrs. Bodham's kindness, in giving me the only picture of my own mother that is to be found, I suppose, in all the world. I had rather possess it than the richest jewel in the British crown, for I loved her with an affection that her death, fifty-two years since, has not in the least abated. I remember her too, young as I was when she died, well enough to know that it is a very exact resemblance of her, and as such it is to me invaluable. Every body loved her, and with an amiable character so impressed upon all her features, every body was sure to do so.

I have a very affectionate and a very clever letter from Johnson, who promises me the transcript of the books entrusted to him in a few days. I have a great love for that young man; he has some drops of the same stream in his veins that once animated the original of that dear picture.

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

MY DEAR COUSIN JOHN, Weston, Feb. 28, 1790.

I HAVE much wished to hear from you, and though you are welcome to write to Mrs. Unwin as often as you please, I wish myself to be numbered among your correspondents.

I shall find time to answer you, doubt it not! Be as busy as we may, we can always find time to do what is agreeable to us. By the way, had you a letter from Mrs. Unwin? I am witness that she addressed one to you before you went into Norfolk; but your mathematico-poetical head forgot to acknowledge the receipt of it.

I was never more pleased in my life than to learn, and to learn from herself, that my dearest Rose[1] is still alive. Had she not engaged me to love her by the sweetness of her character when a child, she would have done it effectually now, by making me the most acceptable present in the world, my own dear mother's picture. I am perhaps the only person living who remembers her; but I remember her well, and can attest on my own knowledge, the truth of the resemblance. Amiable and elegant as the countenance is, such exactly was her own; she was one of the tenderest parents, and so just a copy of her is therefore to me invaluable.

I wrote yesterday to my Rose, to tell her all this, and to thank her for her kindness in sending it. Neither do I forget your kindness, who intimated to her that I should be happy to possess it.

She invites me into Norfolk; but, alas, she might as well invite the house in which I dwell; for all other considerations and impediments apart, how is it possible that a translator of Homer should lumber to such a distance? But though I cannot comply with her kind invitation, I have made myself the best amends in my power by inviting her, and all the family of

[1] Mrs. Anne Bodham.

Donnes, to Weston. Perhaps we could not accommodate them all at once, but in succession we could; and can at any time find room for five, three of them being females, and one a married one. You are a mathematician; tell me then how five persons can be lodged in three beds, (two males and three females,) and I shall have good hope, that you will proceed a senior optime? It would make me happy to see our house so furnished. As to yourself, whom I know to be a *subscalarian*, or a man that sleeps under the stairs, I should have no objection at all, neither could you possibly have any yourself to the garret, as a place in which you might be disposed of with great felicity of accommodation.

I thank you much for your services in the transcribing way, and would by no means have you despair of an opportunity to serve me in the same way yet again. Write to me soon, and tell me when I shall see you.

I have not said the half that I have to say, but breakfast is at hand, which always terminates my epistles.

What have you done with your poem? The trimming that it procured you here has not, I hope, put you out of conceit with it entirely; you are more than equal to the alteration that it needs. Only remember, that in writing, perspicuity is always more than half the battle: the want of it is the ruin of more than half the poetry that is published. A meaning that does not stare you in the face is as bad as no meaning, because nobody will take the pains to poke for it. So now adieu for the present. Beware of killing yourself with problems; for if you do, you will never live to be another Sir Isaac.

Mrs. Unwin's affectionate remembrances attend you; Lady Hesketh is much disposed to love you; perhaps most who know you have some little tendency the same way.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, March 8, 1790.

I THANK thee much, and oft, for negotiating so well this poetical concern with Mrs. ———, and for sending me her opinion in her own hand. I should be unreasonable indeed not to be highly gratified by it, and I like it the better for being modestly expressed. It is, as you know, and it shall be some months longer, my daily business to polish and improve what is done, that when the whole shall appear she may find her expectations answered. I am glad also that thou didst send her the sixteenth Odyssey, though, as I said before, I know not at all at present whereof it is made: but I am sure that thou wouldst not have sent it, hadst thou not conceived a good opinion of it thyself, and thought that it would do me credit. It was very kind in thee to sacrifice to this Minerva on my account.

For my sentiments on the subject of the Test Act, I cannot do better than refer thee to my poem, entitled and called, "Expostulation." I have there expressed myself not much in its favour,—considering it in a religious view; and in a political one, I like it not a jot the better. I am neither Tory nor High Churchman, but an old Whig, as my father was before me; and an enemy consequently to all tyrannical impositions.

Mrs. Unwin bids me return thee many thanks for thy inquiries so kindly made concerning her health. She is a little better than of late, but has been ill continually ever since last November. Every thing that could try patience and submission she has had, and her submission and patience have answered in the trial, though mine on her account have often failed sadly.

I have a letter from Johnson, who tells me that he has sent his transcript to you, begging at the same time more copy. Let him have it by all means; he is an industrious youth, and I love him dearly. I told him that you are disposed to love him a little. A new poem is born on the receipt of my mother's picture. Thou shalt have it.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, The Lodge, March 11, 1790.

I WAS glad to hear from you, for a line from you gives me always much pleasure, but was not much gladdened by the contents of your letter. The state of your health, which I have learned more accurately perhaps from my cousin, except in this last instance, than from yourself, has rather alarmed me, and even she has collected her information upon that subject more from your looks, than from your own acknowledgments. To complain much and often of our indispositions, does not always ensure the pity of the hearer, perhaps sometimes forfeits it; but to dissemble them altogether, or at least to suppress the worst, is attended ultimately with an inconvenience greater still; the

secret will out at last, and our friends, unprepared to receive it, are doubly distressed about us. In saying this I squint a little at Mrs. Unwin, who will read it; it is with her, as with you, the only subject on which she practises any dissimulation at all; the consequence is, that when she is much indisposed I never believe myself in possession of the whole truth, live in constant expectation of hearing something worse, and at the long run am seldom disappointed. It seems therefore, as on all other occasions, so even in this, the better course on the whole to appear what we are; not to lay the fears of our friends asleep by cheerful looks, which do not properly belong to us, or by letters written as if we were well, when in fact we are very much otherwise. On condition however that you act differently toward me for the future, I will pardon the past; and she may gather from my clemency shown to you, some hopes, on the same conditions, of similar clemency to herself.

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, Weston Underwood, March 12, 1790.

I LIVE in such a nook, have so few opportunities of hearing news, and so little time to read it, that to me, to begin a letter seems always a sort of forlorn hope. Can it be possible, I say to myself, that I should have any thing to communicate? These misgivings have an ill effect, so far as my punctuality is concerned, and are apt to deter me from the business of letter-writing, as from an enterprise altogether impracticable.

I will not say that you are more pleased with my trifles than they deserve, lest I should seem to call your judgement in question; but I suspect that a little partiality to the brother of my brother, enters into the opinion you form of them. No matter, however, by what you are influenced, it is for my interest that you should like them at any rate, because, such as they are, they are the only return I can make you for all your kindness. This consideration will have two effects; it will have a tendency to make me more industrious in the production of such pieces, and more attentive to the manner in which I write them. This reminds me of a piece in your possession, which I will entreat you to commit to the flames, because I am somewhat ashamed of it. To make you amends, I hereby promise to send you a new edition of it when time shall serve, delivered from the passages that I dislike in the first, and in other respects amended. The piece that I mean, is one entitled—"To Lady Hesketh on her furnishing for me our house at Weston"—or, as the lawyers say, words to that amount. I have, likewise, since I sent you the last packet, been delivered of two or three other brats, and, as the year proceeds, shall probably add to the number. All that come shall be basketed in time, and conveyed to your door.

I have lately received from a female cousin of mine in Norfolk, whom I have not seen these thirty years, a picture of my own mother. She died when I wanted two days of being six years old; yet I remember her perfectly, find the picture a strong likeness of her, and because her memory has been ever precious to me,

have written a poem on the receipt of it: a poem which, one excepted, I had more pleasure in writing than any that I ever wrote. That one was addressed to a lady whom I expect in a few minutes to come down to breakfast, and who has supplied to me the place of my own mother—my own invaluable mother, these six-and-twenty years. Some sons may be said to have had many fathers, but a plurality of mothers is not common.

Adieu, my dear Madam; be assured that I always think of you with much esteem and affection, and am, with mine and Mrs. Unwin's best compliments to you and yours, most unfeignedly your friend and humble servant,

W. C.

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON.

MY DEAREST MADAM, The Lodge, March 21, 1790.

I SHALL only observe on the subject of your absence that you have stretched it since you went, and have made it a week longer. Weston is sadly *unked* without you; and here are two of us, who will be heartily glad to see you again. I believe you are happier at home than any where, which is a comfortable belief to your neighbours, because it affords assurance that since you are neither likely to ramble for pleasure, nor to meet with any avocations of business, while Weston shall continue to be your home, it will not often want you.

The two first books of my Iliad have been submitted to the inspection and scrutiny of a great critic

of your sex, at the instance of my cousin, as you may suppose. The lady is mistress of more tongues than a few, (it is to be hoped she is single,) and particularly she is mistress of the Greek. She returned them with expressions that if any thing could make a poet prouder than all poets naturally are, would have made me so. I tell you this, because I know that you all interest yourselves in the success of the said Iliad.

My periwig is arrived, and is the very perfection of all periwigs, having only one fault; which is, that my head will only go into the first half of it, the other half, or the upper part of it, continuing still unoccupied. My artist in this way at Olney has however undertaken to make the whole of it tenantable, and then I shall be twenty years younger than you have ever seen me.

I heard of your birthday very early in the morning; the news came from the steeple.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, March 22, 1790.

I REJOICE, my dearest cousin, that my MSS. have roamed the earth so successfully, and have met with no disaster. The single book excepted that went to the bottom of the Thames and rose again, they have been fortunate without exception. I am not superstitious, but have nevertheless as good a right to believe that adventure an omen, and a favourable one, as Swift had to interpret, as he did, the loss of a fine fish, which he had no sooner laid on the bank, than it

flounced into the water again. This he tells us himself he always considered as a type of his future disappointments: and why may not I as well consider the marvellous recovery of my lost book from the bottom of the Thames, as typical of its future prosperity? To say the truth, I have no fears now about the success of my Translation, though in time past I have had many. I knew there was a style somewhere, could I but find it, in which Homer ought to be rendered, and which alone would suit him. Long time I blundered about it, ere I could attain to any decided judgement on the matter; at first I was betrayed by a desire of accommodating my language to the simplicity of his, into much of the quaintness that belonged to our writers of the fifteenth century. In the course of many revisals I have delivered myself from this evil, I believe, entirely; but I have done it slowly, and as a man separates himself from his mistress when he is going to marry. I had so strong a predilection in favour of this style at first, that I was crazed to find that others were not as much enamoured with it as myself. At every passage of that sort which I obliterated, I groaned bitterly, and said to myself, I am spoiling my work to please those who have no taste for the simple graces of antiquity. But in measure, as I adopted a more modern phraseology, I became a convert to their opinion, and in the last revisal, which I am now making, am not sensible of having spared a single expression of the obsolete kind. I see my work so much improved by this alteration, that I am filled with wonder at my own backwardness to assent to the necessity of it, and the more when I consider that

Milton, with whose manner I account myself intimately acquainted, is never quaint, never twangs through the nose, but is every where grand and elegant, without resorting to musty antiquity for his beauties. On the contrary, he took a long stride forward, left the language of his own day far behind him, and anticipated the expressions of a century yet to come.

I have now, as I said, no longer any doubt of the event, but I will give thee a shilling if thou wilt tell me what I shall say in my Preface. It is an affair of much delicacy, and I have as many opinions about it as there are whims in a weathercock.

Send my MSS. and thine when thou wilt. In a day or two I shall enter on the last Iliad. When I have finished it I shall give the Odyssey one more reading, and shall therefore shortly have occasion for the copy in thy possession; but you see that there is no need to hurry.

I leave the little space for Mrs. Unwin's use, who means, I believe, to occupy it,

And am evermore thine most truly,

W. C.

Postscript in the hand of Mrs. Unwin.

You cannot imagine how much your ladyship would oblige your unworthy servant, if you would be so good to let me know in what point I differ from you. All that at present I can say is, that I will readily sacrifice my own opinion, unless I can give you a substantial reason for adhering to it.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, March 23, 1790.

YOUR MSS. arrived safe in New Norfolk Street, and I am much obliged to you for your labours. Were you now at Weston I could furnish you with employment for some weeks, and shall perhaps be equally able to do it in summer, for I have lost my best amanuensis in this place, Mr. George Throckmorton, who is gone to Bath.

You are a man to be envied, who have never read the Odyssey, which is one of the most amusing story-books in the world. There is also much of the finest poetry in the world to be found in it, notwithstanding all that Longinus has insinuated to the contrary. His comparison of the Iliad and Odyssey to the meridian, and to the declining sun, is pretty, but I am persuaded, not just. The prettiness of it seduced him; he was otherwise too judicious a reader of Homer to have made it. I can find in the latter no symptoms of impaired ability, none of the effects of age; on the contrary, it seems to me a certainty, that Homer, had he written the Odyssey in his youth, could not have written it better: and if the Iliad in his old age, that he would have written it just as well. A critic would tell me, that instead of *written*, I should have said *composed*. Very likely;—but I am not writing to one of that snarling generation.

My boy, I long to see thee again. It has happened some way or other, that Mrs. Unwin and I have conceived a great affection for thee. That I should, is the less to be wondered at, (because thou art a shred

of my own mother;) neither is the wonder great that she should fall into the same predicament: for she loves every thing that I love. You will observe, that your own personal right to be beloved makes no part of the consideration. There is nothing that I touch with so much tenderness as the vanity of a young man, because I know how extremely susceptible he is of impressions that might hurt him in that particular part of his composition. If you should ever prove a coxcomb, from which character you stand just now at a greater distance than any young man I know, it shall never be said that I have made you one; no, you will gain nothing by me but the honour of being much valued by a poor poet, who can do you no good while he lives, and has nothing to leave you when he dies. If you can be contented to be dear to me on these conditions, so you shall; but other terms more advantageous than these, or more inviting, none have I to propose.

Farewell. Puzzle not yourself about a subject when you write to either of us; every thing is subject enough from those we love.

W. C.

TO THE REV. ROWLAND HILL.

MY DEAR SIR, Weston Underwood, March 29, 1790.

THE moment when you ceased to be *incog.* I ought to have written you at least a few lines of apology for the liberties I had taken with your hymns, but being extremely busy at that time, and hoping that you would be so charitable as to pardon the omission, I desired Mr. Bull to be my proxy, charging him to make my

excuses, and to assure you that I was perfectly satisfied with your making any alterations that you might see to be necessary in my text. If any thing fell from my pen that seemed to countenance the heresy of *universal redemption*, you did well to displace it, for it contradicted the Scripture, and belied me.

I am much obliged to you for the little volumes which I received safe on Saturday; and because I suppose that your end will be best answered by dispersion, if I should have occasion for half a dozen more, will order them from your bookseller without scruple.

I am, my dear sir, with much respect, and with Mrs. Unwin's compliments,

Your affectionate humble servant,

WM. COWPER.

Should you want me on any similar occasion hereafter, I am always at your disposal.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, April 17, 1790.

YOUR letter that now lies before me is almost three weeks old, and therefore of full age to receive an answer, which it shall have without delay, if the interval between the present moment and that of breakfast should prove sufficient for the purpose.

Yours to Mrs. Unwin was received yesterday, for which she will thank you in due time. I have also seen, and have now in my desk, your letter to Lady Hesketh; she sent it thinking that it would divert me;

in which she was not mistaken. I shall tell her when I write to her next, that you long to receive a line from her. Give yourself no trouble on the subject of the politic device you saw good to recur to, when you presented me with your manuscript; it was an innocent deception, at least it could harm nobody save yourself; an effect which it did not fail to produce;—and since the punishment followed it so closely, by me at least it may very well be forgiven. You ask, how I can tell that you are not addicted to practices of the deceptive kind? And certainly, if the little time that I have had to study you were alone to be considered, the question would not be unreasonable; but in general a man who reaches my years finds

> "That long experience does attain
> To something like prophetic strain."

I am very much of Lavater's opinion, and persuaded that faces are as legible as books, only with these circumstances to recommend them to our perusal, that they are read in much less time, and are much less likely to deceive us. Yours gave me a favourable impression of you the moment I beheld it, and though I shall not tell you in particular what I saw in it, for reasons mentioned in my last, I will add that I have observed in you nothing since that has not confirmed the opinion I then formed in your favour. In fact, I cannot recollect that my skill in physiognomy has ever deceived me, and I should add more on this subject had I room.

When you have shut up your mathematical books, you must give yourself to the study of Greek; not

merely that you may be able to read Homer and the other Greek classics with ease, but the Greek Testament, and the Greek fathers also. Thus qualified, and by the aid of your fiddle into the bargain, together with some portion of the grace of God, (without which nothing can be done,) to enable you to look well to your flock, when you shall get one, you will be well set up for a parson. In which character, if I live to see you in it, I shall expect and hope that you will make a very different figure from most of your fraternity.

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COZ, The Lodge, April 19, 1790.

I THANK thee for my cousin Johnson's letter, which diverted me. I had one from him lately, in which he expressed an ardent desire of a line from you, and the delight he would feel in receiving it. I know not whether you will have the charity to satisfy his longings, but mention the matter, thinking it possible that you may. A letter from a lady to a youth immersed in mathematics must be singularly pleasant.

I am finishing Homer backward, having begun at the last book, and designing to persevere in that crab-like fashion, till I arrive at the first. This may remind you perhaps of a certain poet's prisoner in the Bastile (thank Heaven! in the Bastile now no more,) counting the nails in the door for variety's sake in all directions. I find so little to do in the last revisal,

that I shall soon reach the Odyssey, and soon want those books of it which are in thy possession; but the two first of the Iliad, which are also in thy possession, much sooner; thou mayest therefore send them by the first fair opportunity. I am in high spirits on this subject, and think that I have at last licked the clumsy cub into a shape that will secure to it the favourable notice of the public. Let not ——— retard me, and I shall hope to get it out next winter.

I am glad that thou hast sent the General those verses on my mother's picture. They will amuse him, —only I hope that he will not miss my mother-in-law, and think that she ought to have made a third. On such an occasion it was not possible to mention her with any propriety. I rejoice at the General's recovery;—may it prove a perfect one.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, April 30, 1790.

To my old friend, Dr. Madan, thou couldst not have spoken better than thou didst. Tell him, I beseech you, that I have not forgotten him: tell him also that to my heart and home he will be always welcome; nor he only, but all that are his. His judgement of my Translation gave me the highest satisfaction, because I know him to be a rare old Grecian.

The General's approbation of my picture verses gave me also much pleasure. I wrote them not without tears, therefore I presume it may be that they are felt by others. Should he offer me my father's picture, I

shall gladly accept it. A melancholy pleasure is better than none,—nay verily, better than most. He had a sad task imposed on him, but no man could acquit himself of such a one with more discretion, or with more tenderness. The death of the unfortunate young man reminded me of those lines in Lycidas,

> It was that fatal and perfidious bark,
> Built in the' eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,
> That sunk so low that sacred head of thine!——

How beautiful!

W. C.

LADY HESKETH, NEW NORFOLK STREET, GROSVENOR SQUARE, LONDON.

MY DEAREST COZ, May 2, (1790), Sunday, 2 o'clock.

I SEND this in answer to yours just received, by express to Newport, to prevent if possible thy sending us any salmon at the enormous price you mention. We shall not in the mean time die for want of fish, my friend Sephus having lately sent two baskets of mackerel, on the last of which we dine to-day, and Griggy dines with us on a turkey to-morrow. Therefore send no salmon, unless you wish us both to be choked, till it comes down to a price that one may swallow with safety.

* * * * * *

Our hearts jumped for joy at the Guardian's escape, of which the papers informed us, and we still sympathize with all parties concerned.

I shall be happy also if thou hast been able to acquaint my dear friend Spencer, either by means of his son, or by *personal intercourse* or otherwise, with the joy that it will give me to see him here, and his reverend offspring with him. I shall not be altogether hopeless that he will call perhaps in his way downward.

Yours, with the celerity of lightning,

WM. COWPER.

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON.

MY DEAR MRS. FROG, The Lodge, May 10, 1790.

YOU have by this time, I presume, heard from the Doctor, whom I desired to present to you our best affections, and to tell you that we are well. He sent an urchin, (I do not mean a hedge-hog, commonly called an urchin in old times, but a boy, commonly so called at present,) expecting that he would find you at Bucklands, whither he supposed you gone on Thursday. He sent him charged with divers articles, and among others with letters, or at least with a letter; which I mention, that if the boy should be lost, together with his dispatches, past all possibility of recovery, you may yet know that the Doctor stands acquitted of not writing. That he is utterly lost, (that is to say, the boy, for the Doctor being the last antecedent, as the grammarians say, you might otherwise suppose that he was intended,) is the more probable, because he was never four miles from his home before, having only travelled at the side of a plough-team; and when the Doctor

gave him his direction to Bucklands, he asked, very naturally, if that place was in England. So what has become of him Heaven knows!

I do not know that any adventures have presented themselves since your departure worth mentioning, except that the rabbit, that infested your wilderness, has been shot for devouring your carnations; and that I myself have been in some danger of being devoured in like manner by a great dog, viz. Pearson's. But I wrote him a letter on Friday, (I mean a letter to Pearson, not to his dog, which I mention to prevent mistakes—for the said last antecedent might occasion them in this place also,) informing him, that unless he tied up his great mastiff in the day-time, I would send him a worse thing, commonly called and known by the name of an attorney. When I go forth to ramble in the fields, I do not sally like Don Quixote, with a purpose of encountering monsters, if any such can be found; but am a peaceable poor gentleman, and a poet, who mean nobody any harm,—the foxhunters and the two universities of this land excepted.

I cannot learn from any creature whether the Turnpike Bill is alive or dead;—so ignorant am I, and by such ignoramuses surrounded. But if I know little else, this at least I know, that I love you, and Mr. Frog; that I long for your return, and that I am with Mrs. Unwin's best affections,

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COZ, May 11, 1790.

WE have of late exchanged dispatches with such frequency and nimbleness of finger, that it began to be necessary we should allow ourselves time to breathe. It is well for us both that we spend much of our life with a pen in our hand, else I know not when we should have recovered the effects of such severe exercise.

Your news of Martin's death reached me in one of my melancholy moods, and I reflected on it and felt it accordingly. What he was in reality, God only knows. That he once seemed to have grace is certain, and that no man had a mind more evangelically enlightened is equally so. The Giver of grace and light, and He only, knows how to make allowance for the unavoidable effects of situation in life, constitution, and errors in judgement, and those occurrences which give an unavoidable warp to the conduct. If by his providence he places one of his own people under the influence of any or all these possible causes of declension in spirituality of heart and mind, He will consider it, and to Him, as you observe, the delinquent must be left. He has saved, I doubt not, thousands who in man's account have perished, and has left many to perish whom their survivors have been ready to canonize. Of Martin, therefore, in his present state, I will hope the best, judging and condemning not him, but his abominable and foolish book, which, for the sake

of his connexions, I wish he had never written. The book, indeed, is pretty much forgotten, but it will never be forgotten that polygamy has been defended and recommended in a Christian land, and by a minister of the Gospel, and that his name was Madan. When you shall have learned how he disposed of the much that he left, you will gratify my curiosity by informing me.

The Frogs made their transit from Chillington to Bucklands on Sunday last, and will come home again the last week of the month. From her I have had a letter, which I answered yesterday. George is to join them here at their return, and then the village will seem peopled again.

Poor Beau has been much indisposed these two days, and I have sent him this morning to Gayhurst to consult the huntsman. What ails him, or what is the cause of his ail, I know not; but he is ever gulping, as if swallowing somewhat that would hardly pass, or retching, or coughing,—yet is his vivacity not in the least abated.

I have not heard lately from Johnson the Cantab, but wonder much more that I have had no answer from the Norfolk Rose, to whom I wrote immediately on the receipt of her letter, sending her a loving and pressing invitation to Weston. The only news of the place is, that three great rogues have been apprehended at Olney, and are gone to prison,—one of whom will probably be hanged.

If thou hast any such things as rags (pardon the expression) belonging to thee, Mrs. Unwin is ready to

beg them on her knees for the use of two miserable women on the point of producing,——we have not a rag left. When my odd book comes, they may come with it.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COZ, The Lodge, May 28, 1790.

I THANK thee for the offer of thy best services on this occasion. But Heaven guard my brows from the wreath you mention, whatever wreath beside may hereafter adorn them! It would be a leaden extinguisher clapped on all the fire of my genius, and I should never more produce a line worth reading. To speak seriously, it would make me miserable, and therefore I am sure that thou, of all my friends, wouldst least wish me to wear it.

Adieu, ever thine—in Homer-hurry,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, June 3, 1790.

YOU will wonder when I tell you that I, even I, am considered by people, who live at a great distance, as having interest and influence sufficient to procure a place at court for those who may happen to want one. I have accordingly been applied to within these few days by a Welshman, with a wife and many children, to get him made poet-laureat as fast as possible. If thou wouldst wish to make the world merry twice a

year, thou canst not do better than procure the office for him. I will promise thee, that he shall afford thee a hearty laugh in return every birthday, and every new year. He is an honest man.

Adieu!

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

DEAREST COZ, The Lodge, June 6, 1790.

I SHOULD sooner have acknowledged the receipt of thy charity-box had I not been lately engaged more than usual, not in poetry alone, but in business also. I now tell you, however, that it came safe, to our great joy, and to the great joy especially of the two future mothers whose children were in some danger not only of coming naked from the womb, but of continuing naked afterwards. The money has been divided between them, and the linen; and by me they thank thee with unfeigned gratitude for thy bounty.

The business to which I allude above was my long unliquidated account with the Rev. Luke Heslop. It has cost me many a fit of fretting, and many a time has sunk my spirits; it has indeed been almost a continual vexation to me these twenty years. The delay has been occasioned by himself, and were the account justly settled, the balance would be in my favour, for I have lost more by his negligence than I owe him for his services; yet notwithstanding these considerations which might, and ought perhaps to have consoled me, it is so detestable a thing to be considered as any man's debtor for so long a time, to be occasionally dunned for

payment, and always liable to it, that it has plagued me past measure, and was the cause of that depression of spirits which I mentioned in my last. I have however emerged sooner than I expected,—for nervous fevers, if they once seize me, do not often leave me in a hurry. I pray God to keep me from them, for to me they are the most dreadful of all evils.

Heslop called here about a fortnight since, at which time I told him in pretty strong and severe terms my whole mind concerning the manner in which he had treated me. A day or two ago I wrote to my old friend Sephus, telling him how much the affair had hurt me, and entreating him to sell stock immediately for satisfaction of my reverend creditor. My only fear now is that Joseph's friendship for me may determine him not to do it, and to insist on a regular balance being struck between us. Should this be the case the vexation will still continue, for Heslop is resolved never to go near him more, having been rather roughly handled by him when he saw him last. Thus stands the matter; with which I did not mean to have occupied all my paper; but having told thee that I have been indisposed in my spirits, I thought it necessary to tell thee also the cause. A few days will, I hope, rid me for ever of the subject.

I am happy that Mrs. Howe is so well pleased with what she has seen of my Homer, and will take care that the whole shall not disgrace the sample.

I dined yesterday at the Hall, where I spent my time merrily. Have no uneasiness about me, for I am, I thank God, at this present writing as well and in as good spirits as at any time these many years.

Poor Mrs. Unwin, who was as much hurt as myself, is now well also, and sends you her best affections and her best thanks for your kind answer to her solicitations.

I am, ever thine,

WM. COWPER.

Thanks for the papers, and for the odd Odd-yssey.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

MY DEAR JOHN, Weston, June 7, 1790.

You know my engagements, and are consequently able to account for my silence. I will not therefore waste time and paper in mentioning them, but will only say that, added to those with which you are acquainted, I have had other hinderances, such as business, and a disorder of my spirits, to which I have been all my life subject. At present I am, thank God! perfectly well both in mind and body. Of you I am always mindful, whether I write or not, and very desirous to see you. You will remember, I hope, that you are under engagements to us, and as soon as your Norfolk friends can spare you, will fulfil them. Give us all the time you can, and all that they can spare to us!

You never pleased me more than when you told me you had abandoned your mathematical pursuits. It grieved me to think that you were wasting your time merely to gain a little Cambridge fame, not worth your having. I cannot be contented that your renown should thrive no where but on the banks of the Cam.

Conceive a nobler ambition, and never let your honour be circumscribed by the paltry dimensions of an university! It is well that you have already, as you observe, acquired sufficient information in that science, to enable you to pass creditably such examinations as I suppose you must hereafter undergo. Keep what you have gotten, and be content. More is needless.

You could not apply to a worse than I am to advise you concerning your studies. I was never a regular student myself, but lost the most valuable years of my life in an attorney's office, and in the Temple. I will not therefore give myself airs, and affect to know what I know not. The affair is of great importance to you, and you should be directed in it by a wiser than I. To speak however in very general terms on the subject, it seems to me that your chief concern is with history, natural philosophy, logic, and divinity. As to metaphysics, I know little about them. But the very little that I do know has not taught me to admire them. Life is too short to afford time even for serious trifles. Pursue what you know to be attainable, make truth your object, and your studies will make you a wise man! Let your divinity, if I may advise, be the divinity of the glorious Reformation: I mean in contradistinction to Arminianism, and all the *isms* that were ever broached in this world of error and ignorance.

The divinity of the Reformation is called Calvinism, but injuriously. It has been that of the church of Christ in all ages. It is the divinity of St. Paul, and of St. Paul's master, who met him in his way to Damascus.

I have written in great haste, that I might finish if possible before breakfast. Adieu! Let us see you soon; the sooner the better. Give my love to the silent lady, the Rose, and all my friends around you.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, The Lodge, June 8, 1790.

AMONG the many who love and esteem you, there is none who rejoices more in your felicity than myself. Far from blaming, I commend you much for connecting yourself, young as you are, with a well-chosen companion for life. Entering on the state with uncontaminated morals, you have the best possible prospect of happiness, and will be secure against a thousand and ten thousand temptations, to which, at an early period of life, in such a Babylon as you must necessarily inhabit, you would otherwise have been exposed. I see it too in the light you do, as likely to be advantageous to you in your profession. Men of business have a better opinion of a candidate for employment, who is married, because he has given bond to the world, as you observe, and to himself, for diligence, industry, and attention. It is altogether therefore a subject of much congratulation; and mine, to which I add Mrs. Unwin's, is very sincere. Samson at his marriage proposed a riddle to the Philistines. I am no Samson, neither are you a Philistine. Yet expound to me the following, if you can.

What are they, which stand at a distance from each other, and meet without ever moving?

Should you be so fortunate as to guess it, you may propose it to the company, when you celebrate your nuptials; and if you can win thirty changes of raiment by it, as Samson did by his, let me tell you, they will be no contemptible acquisition to a young beginner.

You will not, I hope, forget your way to Weston, in consequence of your marriage, where you and yours will be always welcome.

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, Weston, June 14, 1790.

I HAVE hardly a scrap of paper belonging to me that is not scribbled over with blank verse; and taking out your letter from a bundle of others, this moment, I find it thus inscribed on the seal side:

> ——— meantime his steeds
> Snorted, by Myrmidons detain'd, and loosed
> From their own master's chariot, foam'd to fly.

You will easily guess to what they belong; and I mention the circumstance merely in proof of my perpetual engagement to Homer, whether at home or abroad; for when I committed these lines to the back of your letter, I was rambling at a considerable distance from home. I set one foot on a mole-hill, placed my hat with the crown upward on my knee, laid your letter upon it, and with a pencil wrote the fragment that I have sent you. In the same posture I have written many and many a passage of a work which I hope soon to have done with. But all this is

foreign to what I intended when I first took pen in hand. My purpose then was, to excuse my long silence as well as I could, by telling you that I am at present not only a labourer in verse, but in prose also, having been requested by a friend, to whom I could not refuse it, to translate for him a series of Latin letters received from a Dutch minister of the gospel at the Cape of Good Hope. With this additional occupation you will be sensible that my hands are full; and it is a truth that, except to yourself, I would, just at this time, have written to nobody.

I felt a true concern for what you told me in your last respecting the ill state of health of your much-valued friend Mr. Martyn. You say, if I knew half his worth, I should, with you, wish his longer continuance below. Now you must understand that, ignorant as I am of Mr. Martyn, except by your report of him, I do nevertheless sincerely wish it—and that, both for your sake and my own; nor less for the sake of the public. For your sake, because you love and esteem him highly; for the sake of the public, because, should it please God to take him before he has completed his great botanical work, I suppose no other person will be able to finish it so well; and for my own sake, because I know he has a kind and favourable opinion beforehand of my translation, and consequently, should it justify his prejudice when it appears, he will stand my friend against an army of Cambridge critics. It would have been strange indeed if *self* had not peeped out on this subject. I beg you will present my best respects to him, and

assure him that were it possible he could visit Weston, I should be most happy to receive him.

Mrs. Unwin would have been employed in transcribing my rhimes for you, would her health have permitted; but it is very seldom that she can write without being much a sufferer by it. She has almost a constant pain in her side, which forbids it. As soon as it leaves her, or much abates, she will be glad to work for you.

I am, like you and Mr. King, an admirer of clouds, but only when there are blue intervals, and pretty wide ones too, between them. One cloud is too much for me, but a hundred are not too many. So with this riddle and with my best respects to Mr. King, to which I add Mrs. Unwin's to you both, I remain, my dear madam,

Truly yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAR COZ, The Lodge, June 17, 1790.

HERE am I, at eight in the morning, in full dress, going a visiting to Chicheley. We are a strong party, and fill two chaises; Mrs. F. the elder, and Mrs. G. in one; Mrs. F. the younger, and myself in another. Were it not that I shall find Chesters at the end of my journey, I should be inconsolable. That expectation alone supports my spirits; and even with this prospect before me, when I saw this moment a poor old woman coming up the lane opposite my window,

I could not help sighing, and saying to myself—"Poor, but happy old woman! thou art exempted by thy situation in life from riding in chaises, and making thyself fine in a morning, happier therefore in my account than I, who am under the cruel necessity of doing both. Neither dost thou write verses, neither hast thou ever heard of the name of Homer, whom I am miserable to abandon for a whole morning!" This, and more of the same sort, passed in my mind on seeing the old woman abovesaid.

The troublesome business, with which I filled my last letter, is (I hope) by this time concluded, and Mr. Archdeacon satisfied. I can, to be sure, but ill afford to pay fifty pounds for another man's negligence, but would be happy to pay a hundred rather than be treated as if I were insolvent,—threatened with attorneys and bums. One would think that, living where I live, I might be exempted from trouble. But alas! as the philosophers often affirm, there is no nook under heaven in which trouble cannot enter; and perhaps had there never been one philosopher in the world, this is a truth that would not have been always altogether a secret.

I have made two inscriptions lately at the request of Thomas Gifford, Esq. who is sowing twenty acres with acorns on one side of his house, and twenty acres with ditto on the other. He erects two memorials of stone on the occasion, that when posterity shall be curious to know the age of the oaks, their curiosity may be gratified.

My works therefore will not all perish, or will not all perish soon, for he has ordered his lapidary to cut

the characters very deep, and in stone extremely hard. It is not in vain then, that I have so long exercised the business of a poet. I shall at least reap the reward of my labours, and be immortal probably for many years.

Ever thine,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, June 22, 1790.

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Villoison makes no mention of the serpent, whose skin, or bowels, or perhaps both, were honoured with the Iliad and Odyssey inscribed upon them. But I have conversed with a living eyewitness of an African serpent long enough to have afforded skin and guts for the purpose. In Africa there are ants also, which frequently destroy these monsters. They are not much larger than ours, but they travel in a column of immense length, and eat through every thing that opposes them. Their bite is like a spark of fire. When these serpents have killed their prey, lion or tiger or any other large animal, before they swallow him, they take a considerable circuit round about the carcase, to see if the ants are coming, because when they have gorged their prey, they are unable to escape them. They are nevertheless sometimes surprised by them in their unwieldy state, and the ants make a passage through them. Now if you thought your own

story of Homer, bound in snake skin, worthy of three notes of admiration, you cannot do less than add six to mine, confessing at the same time, that if I put you to the expense of a letter, I do not make you pay your money for nothing. But this account I had from a person of most unimpeached veracity.

I rejoice with you in the good Bishop's removal to St. Asaph, and especially because the Norfolk parsons much more resemble the ants above-mentioned than he the serpent. He is neither of vast size, nor unwieldy, nor voracious; neither, I dare say, does he sleep after dinner, according to the practice of the said serpent. But, harmless as he is, I am mistaken if his mutinous clergy did not sometimes disturb his rest, and if he did not find their bite, though they could not actually eat through him, in a degree resembling fire. Good men like him, and peaceable, should have good and peaceable folks to deal with, and I heartily wish him such in his new diocese. But if he will keep the clergy to their business, he shall have trouble, let him go where he may; and this is boldly spoken, considering that I speak it to one of that reverend body. But ye are like Jeremiah's basket of figs. Some of you could not be better, and some of you are stark naught. Ask the bishop himself, if this be not true!

W. C.

TO MRS. BODHAM.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Weston, June 29, 1790.

IT is true that I did sometimes complain to Mrs. Unwin of your long silence. But it is likewise true, that I made many excuses for you in my own mind, and did not feel myself at all inclined to be angry, nor even much to wonder. There is an awkwardness, and a difficulty in writing to those whom distance and length of time have made in a manner new to us, that naturally gives us a check, when we would otherwise be glad to address them. But a time, I hope, is near at hand, when you and I shall be effectually delivered from all such constraints, and correspond as fluently as if our intercourse had suffered much less interruption.

You must not suppose, my dear, that though I may be said to have lived many years with a pen in my hand, I am myself altogether at my ease on this tremendous occasion. Imagine rather, and you will come nearer to the truth, that when I placed this sheet before me I asked myself more than once, "how shall I fill it?" One subject indeed presents itself, the pleasant prospect that opens upon me of our coming once more together; but that once exhausted, with what shall I proceed? Thus I questioned myself; but finding neither end nor profit of such questions, I bravely resolved to dismiss them all at once, and to engage in the great enterprise of a letter to my quondam Rose at a venture——There is great truth in a rant of Nat. Lee's, or of Dryden's, I know not which, who makes an enamoured youth say to his mistress,

And nonsense shall be eloquence in love.

For certain it is, that they who truly love one another are not very nice examiners of each other's style or matter; if an epistle comes, it is always welcome, though it be perhaps neither so wise nor so witty as one might have wished to make it. And now, my cousin, let me tell thee how much I feel myself obliged to Mr. Bodham for the readiness he expresses to accept my invitation. Assure him that, stranger as he is to me at present, and natural as the dread of strangers has ever been to me, I shall yet receive him with open arms, because he is your husband, and loves you dearly. That consideration alone will endear him to me, and I dare say that I shall not find it his only recommendation to my best affections. May the health of his relation (his mother I suppose) be soon restored, and long continued, and may nothing melancholy, of what kind soever, interfere to prevent our joyful meeting. Between the present moment and September our house is clear for your reception, and you have nothing to do but to give us a day or two's notice of your coming. In September we expect Lady Hesketh, and I only regret that our house is not large enough to hold all together, for were it possible that you could meet, you would love each other.

Mrs. Unwin bids me offer you her best love. She is never well, but always patient, and always cheerful, and feels beforehand that she shall be loth to part with you.

My love to all the dear Donnes of every name!—Write soon, no matter about what.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

July 7, 1790.

INSTEAD of beginning with the saffron-vested morning to which Homer invites me, on a morning that has no saffron vest to boast, I shall begin with you.

It is irksome to us both to wait so long as we must for you, but we are willing to hope that by a longer stay you will make us amends for all this tedious procrastination.

Mrs. Unwin has made known her whole case to Mr. Gregson, whose opinion of it has been very consolatory to me: he says indeed it is a case perfectly out of the reach of all physical aid, but at the same time not at all dangerous. Constant pain is a sad grievance, whatever part is affected, and she is hardly ever free from an aching head, as well as an uneasy side, but patience is an anodyne of God's own preparation, and of that he gives her largely.

The French, who like all lively folks are extreme in every thing, are such in their zeal for freedom; and if it were possible to make so noble a cause ridiculous, their manner of promoting it could not fail to do so. Princes and peers reduced to plain gentlemanship, and gentles reduced to a level with their own lackeys, are excesses of which they will repent hereafter. Differences of rank and subordination are, I believe, of God's appointment, and consequently essential to the well-being of society: but what we mean by fanaticism in religion is exactly that which animates their politics; and unless time should sober them, they will, after all, be an unhappy people. Perhaps it deserves not much

to be wondered at, that at their first escape from tyrannic shackles they should act extravagantly, and treat their kings as they have sometimes treated their idols. To these however they are reconciled in due time again, but their respect for monarchy is at an end. They want nothing now but a little English sobriety, and that they want extremely: I heartily wish them some wit in their anger, for it were great pity that so many millions should be miserable for want of it.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

MY DEAR JOHNNY, Weston, July 8, 1790.

YOU do well to perfect yourself on the violin. Only beware, that an amusement so very bewitching as music, especially when we produce it ourselves, do not steal from you ALL those hours that should be given to study. I can be well content, that it should serve you as a refreshment after severer exercises, but not that it should engross you wholly. Your own good sense will most probably dictate to you this precaution, and I might have spared you the trouble of it; but I have a degree of zeal for your proficiency in more important pursuits, that would not suffer me to suppress it.

Having delivered my conscience by giving you this sage admonition, I will convince you that I am a censor not over and above severe, by acknowledging in the next place that I have known very good performers on the violin very learned also; and my cousin, Dr. Spencer Madan, is an instance.

I am delighted that you have engaged your sister to visit us; for I say to myself, if John be amiable, what must Catharine be? For we males, be we angelic as we may, are always surpassed by the ladies. But know this, that I shall not be in love with either of you, if you stay with us only a few days, for you talk of a week or so. Correct this erratum, I beseech you, and convince us by a much longer continuance here, that it was one.

W. C.

Mrs. Unwin has never been well since you saw her. You are not passionately fond of letter-writing, I perceive, who have dropped a lady; but you will be a loser by the bargain; for one letter of hers in point of real utility and sterling value, is worth twenty of mine, and you will never have another from her, till you have earned it.

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, Weston, July 16, 1790.

TAKING it for granted that this will find you at Pertenhall, I follow you with an early line, and a hasty one, to tell you how much we rejoice to have seen yourself and Mr. King; and how much regret you have left behind you. The wish that we expressed when we were together, Mrs. Unwin and I have more than once expressed since your departure, and have always felt it—that it had pleased Providence to appoint our habitations nearer to each other. This is a life of

wishes, and they only are happy who have arrived where wishes cannot enter. We shall live now in hope of a second meeting, and a longer interview; which, if it please God to continue to you and to Mr. King your present measure of health, you will be able, I trust, to contrive hereafter. You did not leave us without encouragement to expect it; and I know that you do not raise expectations but with a sincere design to fulfil them.

Nothing shall be wanting, on our part, to accomplish in due time a journey to Pertenhall. But I am a strange creature, who am less able than any man living to project any thing out of the common course, with a reasonable prospect of performance. I have singularities, of which, I believe, at present you know nothing; and which would fill you with wonder if you knew them. I will add, however, in justice to myself, that they would not lower me in your good opinion; though, perhaps, they might tempt you to question the soundness of my upper story. Almost twenty years have I been thus unhappily circumstanced; and the remedy is in the hand of God only. That I make you this partial communication on the subject, conscious, at the same time, that you are well worthy to be entrusted with the whole, is merely because the recital would be too long for a letter, and painful both to me and to you. But all this may vanish in a moment; and, if it please God, it shall. In the mean time, my dear madam, remember me in your prayers, and mention me at those times, as one whom it has pleased God to afflict with singular visitations.

How I regret, for poor Mrs. Unwin's sake, your distance! She has no friend suitable as you to her disposition and character, in all the neighbourhood. Mr. King, too, is just the friend and companion with whom I could be happy; but such grow not in this country. Pray tell him that I remember him with much esteem and regard; and believe me, my dear Madam, with the sincerest affection,

Yours entirely,

W. C.

I have just left myself room to add Mrs. Unwin's true love.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, July 31, 1790.

You have by this time, I presume, answered Lady Hesketh's letter. If not, answer it without delay; and this injunction I give you, judging that it may not be entirely unnecessary; for though I have seen you but once, and only for two or three days, I have found out that you are a scatter-brain. I made the discovery perhaps the sooner, because in this you very much resemble myself, who in the course of my life have, through mere carelessness and inattention, lost many advantages; an insuperable shyness has also deprived me of many. And here again there is a resemblance between us. You will do well to guard against both, for of both, I believe, you have a considerable share as well as myself.

We long to see you again, and are only concerned at the short stay you propose to make with us. If time should seem to you as short at Weston, as it seems to us, your visit here will be gone "as a dream when one awaketh, or as a watch in the night."

It is a life of dreams, but the pleasantest one naturally wishes longest.

I shall find employment for you, having made already some part of the fair copy of the Odyssey a foul one. I am revising it for the last time, and spare nothing that I can mend. The Iliad is finished.

If you have Donne's poems, bring them with you, for I have not seen them many years, and should like to look them over.

You may treat us too, if you please, with a little of your music, for I seldom hear any, and delight much in it. You need not fear a rival, for we have but two fiddles in the neighbourhood,—one a gardener's, the other a tailor's: terrible performers both!

W. C.

TO MR. JOHNSON.

Sept. 7, 1790.

It grieves me that after all I am obliged to go into public without the whole advantage of Mr. Fuseli's judicious strictures. My only consolation is, that I have not forfeited them by my own impatience. Five years are no small portion of a man's life, especially at the latter end of it; and in those five years, being a man of almost no engagements, I have done more in the way of hard work, than most could have done in

twice the number. I beg you to present my compliments to Mr. Fuseli, with many and sincere thanks for the services that his own more important occupations would allow him to render me.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Sept. 8, 1790.

We rejoice that, though unhorsed or rather horseless, you are come safe home again, and shall be happy to hear that you are mounted again, because our having the pleasure to see you here depends on it.

Mrs. Unwin, who is never well, is yet not worse than when you saw her last. As to myself, I am particularly frisky, having this very day sent all Homer to London.

Our joint best love attends yourself and family, and I am most truly yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO MRS. BODHAM.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Weston, Sept. 9, 1790.

I am truly sorry to be forced after all to resign the hope of seeing you and Mr. Bodham at Weston this year; the next may possibly be more propitious, and I heartily wish it may. Poor Catharine's unseasonable indisposition has also cost us a disappointment, which we much regret; and were it not that Johnny has made shift to reach us, we should think ourselves completely unfortunate. But him we have, and him

we will hold as long as we can, so expect not very soon to see him in Norfolk. He is so harmless, cheerful, gentle, and good-tempered, and I am so entirely at my ease with him, that I cannot surrender him without a *needs must*, even to those who have a superior claim upon him. He left us yesterday morning, and whither do you think he is gone, and on what errand? Gone, as sure as you are alive, to London, and to convey my Homer to the bookseller's. But he will return the day after to-morrow, and I mean to part with him no more, till necessity shall force us asunder. Suspect me not, my cousin, of being such a monster as to have imposed this task myself on your kind nephew, or even to have thought of doing it. It happened that one day, as we chatted by the fireside, I expressed a wish that I could hear of some trusty body going to London, to whose care I might consign my voluminous labours, the work of five years. For I purpose never to visit that city again myself, and should have been uneasy to have left a charge, of so much importance to me, altogether to the care of a stage-coachman. Johnny had no sooner heard my wish, than offering himself to the service, he fulfilled it; and his offer was made in such terms, and accompanied with a countenance and manner expressive of so much alacrity, that unreasonable as I thought it at first, to give him so much trouble, I soon found that I should mortify him by a refusal. He is gone therefore with a box full of poetry, of which I think nobody will plunder him. He has only to say what it is, and there is no commodity I think a freebooter would covet less.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, The Lodge, Sept. 13, 1790.

YOUR letter was particularly welcome to me, not only because it came after a long silence, but because it brought me good news—news of your marriage, and consequently, I trust, of your happiness. May that happiness be durable as your lives, and may you be the *Felices ter et amplius* of whom Horace sings so sweetly! This is my sincere wish, and, though expressed in prose, shall serve as your epithalamium. You comfort me when you say that your marriage will not deprive us of the sight of you hereafter. If you do not wish that I should regret your union, you must make that assurance good as often as you have opportunity.

After perpetual versification during five years, I find myself at last a vacant man, and reduced to read for my amusement. My Homer is gone to the press, and you will imagine that I feel a void in consequence. The proofs however will be coming soon, and I shall avail myself with all my force of this last opportunity to make my work as perfect as I wish it. I shall not therefore be long time destitute of employment, but shall have sufficient to keep me occupied all the winter, and part of the ensuing spring, for Johnson purposes to publish either in March, April, or May. My very preface is finished. It did not cost me much trouble, being neither long nor learned. I have spoken my mind as freely as decency would permit on the subject of Pope's version, allowing him, at the same time, all the merit to which I think him entitled.

I have given my reasons for translating in blank verse, and hold some discourse on the mechanism of it, chiefly with a view to obviate the prejudices of some people against it. I expatiate a little on the manner in which I think Homer ought to be rendered, and in which I have endeavoured to render him myself, and anticipated two or three cavils, to which I foresee that I shall be liable from the ignorant or uncandid, in order, if possible, to prevent them. These are the chief heads of my preface, and the whole consists of about twelve pages.

It is possible when I come to treat with Johnson about the copy, I may want some person to negotiate for me; and knowing no one so intelligent as yourself in books, or so well qualified to estimate their just value, I shall beg leave to resort to and rely on you as my negotiator. But I will not trouble you unless I should see occasion. My cousin was the bearer of my MSS. to London. He went on purpose, and returns to-morrow. Mrs. Unwin's affectionate felicitations, added to my own, conclude me,

My dear friend, sincerely yours,

W. C.

The trees of a colonnade will solve my riddle.

TO CLOTWORTHY ROWLEY, ESQ.

MY DEAR ROWLEY, Weston Underwood, Sept. 16, 1790.

I HAVE given you time to return to Dublin and to settle yourself there; and now perhaps you will find yourself at leisure to receive my thanks for the readiness with which you have resumed your enlisting labours, disagreeable in themselves, and which nothing but your friendship for him in whose service they are performed, could render supportable. You will not think it sufficient, I trust, when you shall have completed your list, to send the money only, but will transmit the names of the subscribers also. Pardon a hint which could not possibly be wanted, except by an Hibernian, or by one who has lived long in Ireland.

You are happy who, I presume, have not to deal with booksellers and printers, the most dilatory of mankind, and who seem to exist only to torment and distract us miserable authors. My copy has been some weeks in Town, yet have I but this moment received the second proof-sheet. If you are possessed of any secret that will make a snail gallop—at least urge him to a trot, communicate it without delay, that I may accelerate with it the movements of these tedious vermin.

I find in my list the name of N. Westcomb, Esq. This, I presume, is he whom we were formerly wont to call Cousin Westcomb. I much respect him, and feel the obligation he has conferred on me, very sensibly, and if you have any correspondence with him, which, considering your intimacy in old times, seems

very probable, I shall be obliged to you if you will tell him so. I cannot help considering my subscription as a sort of test of their constancy who formerly professed a kindness for me. They in whom a spark of that kindness survives will hardly fail to discover it on such an occasion, and seeing the affair in this light, I feel myself a little grieved and hurt that some names which old friendship gave me a right to expect, are not to be found in my catalogue. The Lord Chancellor, however, has done handsomely, having twice honoured me with his name, once by solicitation, and in the second instance voluntarily. He is, like yourself, a man whose attachments are made of stuff that is proof against time and absence.

I revere your paternal character and am delighted with the anxiety you express about your children's welfare, yet at the same time am a little apprehensive lest your solicitudes on that subject should so far exceed their proper limits as to make you at times unhappy. Remember, my friend, that He who gave them to you is able by his providence to preserve them also. The great success of the Rowleys at the last election is a subject of congratulation, for which I ought to have left myself more room. I can now only say that I sincerely rejoice in it, and that I am most truly yours,

W. COWPER.

Will not your trip to Bath afford you an opportunity to take a peep at Weston? Some of your trips to England I hope will do it, for I should greatly rejoice to see you.

TO MR. JOHNSON.

Weston, Oct. 3, 1790.

MR. NEWTON having again requested that the preface which he wrote for my first volume may be prefixed to it, I am desirous to gratify him in a particular that so emphatically bespeaks his friendship for me; and should my books see another edition, shall be obliged to you if you will add it accordingly.

I beg that you will not suffer your reverence either for Homer, or his translator, to check your continual examinations. I never knew with certainty, till now, that the marginal strictures I found in the Task proofs were yours. The justness of them, and the benefit I derived from them, are fresh in my memory, and I doubt not that their utility will be the same in the present instance[1].

Weston, Oct. 30, 1790.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, Weston Underwood, Oct. 5, 1790.

I AM truly concerned that you have so good an excuse for your silence. Were it proposed to my choice, whether you should omit to write through illness or indifference to me, I should be selfish enough, perhaps, to find decision difficult for a few moments; but

[1] I am anxious to preserve this singular anecdote; as it is honourable both to the modest poet, and to his intelligent bookseller.—HAYLEY.

have such an opinion, at the same time, of my affection for you, as to be verily persuaded that I should at last make a right option, and wish you rather to forget me than to be afflicted. But there is One, wiser and more your friend than I can possibly be, who appoints all your sufferings, and who, by a power altogether his own, is able to make them good for you.

I wish heartily that my verses had been more worthy of the Counterpane, their subject. The gratitude I felt, when you brought it and gave it to me, might have inspired better; but a head full of Homer, I find, by sad experience, is good for little else. Lady Hesketh, who is here, has seen your gift, and pronounced it the most beautiful and best executed of the kind she ever saw.

I have lately received from my bookseller a copy of my subscribers' names, and do not find among them the name of Mr. Professor Martyn. I mention it, because you informed me, some time since, of his kind intention to number himself among my encouragers on this occasion; and because I am unwilling to lose, for want of speaking in time, the honour that his name will do me. It is possible, too, that he may have subscribed, and that his non-appearance may be owing merely to Johnson's having forgot to enter him. Perhaps you will have an opportunity to ascertain the matter. The catalogue will be printed soon, and published in the Analytical Review, as the last and most effectual way of advertising my translation; and the name of the gentleman in question will be particularly serviceable to me in this first edition of it.

My whole work is in the booksellers' hands, and ought by this time to be in the press. The next spring is the time appointed for the publication. It is a genial season, when people who are ever good-tempered at all, are sure to be so; a circumstance well worthy of an author's attention, especially of mine, who am just going to give a thump on the outside of the critics' hive, that will probably alarm them all.

Mrs. Unwin, I think, is on the whole rather improved in her health since we had the pleasure of your short visit; I should say, the pleasure of your visit, and the pain of its shortness.

I am, my dearest Madam,
Most truly yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR MR. BULL, Weston, Nov. 1, 1790.

I THANK you much for the communication of the enclosed, which I read with a tender remembrance of the days that are past, and felt much sympathy with the writer of it. If you have not already answered it, present our kindest love to him when you do.

I must trouble you to beg Mr. Greatheed, in Lady Hesketh's name, to return, if he has done with it, the book she lent him, sending it either to Olney or Weston, as may be most convenient to him. Griggs the butcher will take the charge of it.

Our best compliments attend yourself, Mrs. Bull,

and your son. Let us see you when the weather will permit.

Yours ever,

WM. COWPER.

TO MRS. BODHAM.

MY DEAR COZ, Weston, Nov. 21, 1790.

OUR kindness to your nephew is no more than he must entitle himself to wherever he goes. His amiable disposition and manners will never fail to secure him a warm place in the affection of all who know him. The advice I gave respecting his poem on Audley End was dictated by my love of him, and a sincere desire of his success. It is one thing to write what may please our friends, who, because they are such, are apt to be a little biassed in our favour; and another to write what may please every body; because they who have no connexion, or even knowledge of the author, will be sure to find fault if they can. My advice, however salutary and necessary as it seemed to me, was such as I dared not have given to a poet of less diffidence than he. Poets are to a proverb irritable, and he is the only one I ever knew, who seems to have no spark of that fire about him. He has left us about a fortnight, and sorry we were to lose him; but had he been my son, he must have gone, and I could not have regretted him more. If his sister be still with you, present my love to her, and tell her how much I wish to see them at Weston together.

Mrs. Hewitt probably remembers more of my child-

hood, than I can recollect either of hers or my own; but this I recollect, that the days of that period were happy days, compared with most I have seen since. There are few perhaps in the world who have not cause to look back with regret on the days of infancy; yet, to say the truth, I suspect some deception in this. For infancy itself has its cares; and though we cannot now conceive how trifles could affect us much, it is certain that they did. Trifles they appear now, but such they were not then.

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

MY BIRTH-DAY.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY, Friday, Nov. 26, 1790.

I AM happy that you have escaped from the claws of Euclid into the bosom of Justinian. It is useful I suppose to *every* man, to be well grounded in the principles of jurisprudence; and I take it to be a branch of science, that bids much fairer to enlarge the mind, and give an accuracy of reasoning, than all the mathematics in the world. Mind your studies, and you will soon be wiser than I can hope to be.

We had a visit on Monday from one of the first women in the world; in point of character, I mean, and accomplishments, the Dowager Lady Spencer! I may receive perhaps some honours hereafter, should my translation speed according to my wishes, and the pains I have taken with it; but shall never receive

any that I shall esteem so highly. She is indeed worthy to whom I should dedicate, and may but my Odyssey prove as worthy of her, I shall have nothing to fear from the critics.

Yours, my dear Johnny,
With much affection,

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, Weston Underwood, Nov. 29, 1790.

It has not been owing to any neglect of mine, that by my long silence I have reduced you to the necessity of concluding that your letter, enclosing that of Mr. Martyn, never reached me. The post brought them safe, and at the proper time; but an indisposition of the feverish kind, attended by a violent cough, seized me immediately after, and rendered me incapable of acknowledging the kindness both of your own letter and of Mr. Martyn's. All this was the effect of a cold, as you will suppose; and it proved the most obstinate that I ever had to deal with,—so obstinate that I have but just conquered it even by the aid of James's powder.

I value highly, as I ought and hope that I always shall, the favourable opinion of such men as Mr. Martyn: though to say the truth, their commendations, instead of making me proud, have rather a tendency to humble me, conscious as I am that I am over-rated. There is an old piece of advice, given by an ancient poet and satirist, which it behoves every man, who stands well in the opinion of others, to lay up in his bosom:—

Take care to be, what you are reported to be. By due attention to this wise counsel, it is possible to turn the praises of our friends to good account, and to convert that which might prove an incentive to vanity into a lesson of wisdom. I will keep your good and respectable friend's letter very safely, and restore it to you the first opportunity. I beg, my dear Madam, that you will present my best compliments to Mr. Martyn, when you shall either see him next or write to him.

To that gentleman's enquiries I am, doubtless, obliged for the recovery of no small proportion of my subscription-list: for in consequence of his application to Johnson, and very soon after it, I received from him no fewer than forty-five names, that had been omitted in the list he sent me, and that would probably never have been thought of more. No author, I believe, has a more inattentive or indolent bookseller: but he has every body's good word for liberality and honesty; therefore I must be content.

The press proceeds at present as well as I can reasonably wish. A month has passed since we began, and I revised this morning the first sheet of the sixth Iliad. Mrs. Unwin begs to add a line from herself, so that I have only room to subjoin my best respects to Mr. King, and to say that I am truly,

My dear Madam, yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, The Lodge, Nov. 30, 1790.

I WILL confess that I thought your letter somewhat tardy, though at the same time I made every excuse for you, except, as it seems, the right. *That* indeed was out of the reach of all possible conjecture. I could not guess that your silence was occasioned by your being occupied with either thieves or thief-takers. Since, however, the cause was such, I rejoice that your labours were not in vain, and that the freebooters, who had plundered your friend, are safe in limbo. I admire too, as much as I rejoice in your success, the indefatigable spirit that prompted you to pursue, with such unremitting perseverance, an object not to be reached but at the expense of infinite trouble, and that must have led you into an acquaintance with scenes and characters the most horrible to a mind like yours. I see in this conduct the zeal and firmness of your friendship to whomsoever professed; and though I wanted not a proof of it myself, contemplate so unequivocal an indication of what you really are, and of what I always believed you to be, with much pleasure. May you rise from the condition of an humble prosecutor, or witness, to the bench of judgement!

When your letter arrived, it found me with the worst and most obstinate cold that I ever caught. This was one reason why it had not a speedier answer. Another is, that except Tuesday morning, there is none in the week in which I am not engaged in the last revisal of my Translation;—the revisal I mean of

my proof-sheets. To this business I give myself with an assiduity and attention truly admirable, and set an example, which if other poets could be apprized of, they would do well to follow. Miscarriages in authorship, I am persuaded, are as often to be ascribed to want of painstaking, as to want of ability.

Lady Hesketh, Mrs. Unwin, and myself, often mention you, and always in terms, that, though you would blush to hear them, you need not be ashamed of; at the same time wishing much that you could change our trio into a quartetto.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Dec. 1, 1790.

IT is plain that you understand trap, as we used to say at school: for you begin with accusing me of long silence, conscious yourself at the same time that you have been half a year in my debt, or thereabout. But I will answer your accusations with a boast of having intended many a day to write to you again, notwithstanding your long insolvency. Your brother and sister of Chicheley can both witness for me that, weeks since, I testified such an intention; and if I did not execute it, it was not for want of good will, but for want of leisure. When will you be able to glory of such designs, so liberal and magnificent,—you, who have nothing to do by your own confession but to grow fat and saucy? Add to all this, that I have had a violent cold, such as I never have but at

the first approach of winter, and such as at that time I seldom escape. A fever accompanied it, and an incessant cough.

You measure the speed of printers, of my printer at least, rather by your own wishes than by any just standard. Mine, I believe, is as nimble a one as falls to the share of poets in general, though not nimble enough to satisfy either the author or his friends. I told you that my work would go to press in autumn, and so it did. But it had been six weeks in London ere the press began to work upon it. About a month since we began to print, and at the rate of nine sheets in a fortnight have proceeded to about the middle of the sixth Iliad. "No further?" you say. I answer—No, nor even so far, without much scolding on my part both at the bookseller and the printer. But courage, my friend! Fair and softly as we proceed, we shall find our way through at last; and in confirmation of this hope, while I write this, another sheet arrives. I expect to publish in the spring.

I love and thank you for the ardent desire you express to hear me bruited abroad, *et per ora virûm volitantem.* For your encouragement I will tell you that I read, myself at least, with wonderful complacence what I have done; and if the world, when it shall appear, do not like it as well as I, we will both say and swear with Fluellin, that it is an ass and a fool (look you!) and a prating coxcomb.

I felt no ambition of the laurel. Else, though vainly perhaps, I had friends who would have made a stir on my behalf on that occasion. I confess that when I learned the new condition of the office, that odes were

no longer required, and that the salary was increased, I felt not the same dislike of it. But I could neither go to court, nor could I kiss hands, were it for a much more valuable consideration. Therefore never expect to hear that royal favours find out me!

Adieu, my dear old friend! I will send you a mortuary copy soon, and in the mean time remain,

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, Dec. 18, 1790.

I PERCEIVE myself so flattered by the instances of illustrious success mentioned in your letter, that I feel all the amiable modesty, for which I was once so famous, sensibly giving way to a spirit of vain-glory.

The King's College subscription makes me proud; the effect that my verses have had on your two young friends, the mathematicians, makes me proud; and I am, if possible, prouder still of the contents of the letter that you enclosed.

You complained of being stupid, and sent me one of the cleverest letters. I have not complained of being stupid, and have sent you one of the dullest. But it is no matter; I never aim at any thing above the pitch of every day's scribble, when I write to those I love.

Homer proceeds, my boy! We shall get through it in time, and, I hope, by the time appointed. We are now in the tenth Iliad. I expect the ladies every minute to breakfast. You have their best love; mine attends the whole army of Donnes at Mattishall Green

assembled. How happy should I find myself, were I but one of the party! My capering days are over;—But do you caper for me, that you may give them some idea of the happiness I should feel were I in the midst of them!

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.

MY DEAR MADAM, Weston Underwood, Dec. 31, 1790.

RETURNING from my walk at half-past three, I found your welcome messenger in the kitchen; and entering the study, found also the beautiful present with which you had charged him. We have all admired it, (for Lady Hesketh was here to assist us in doing so;) and for my own particular, I return you my sincerest thanks, a very inadequate compensation. Mrs. Unwin, not satisfied to send you thanks only, begs your acceptance likewise of a turkey, which, though the figure of it might not much embellish a counterpane, may possibly serve hereafter to swell the dimensions of a feather-bed.

I have lately been visited with an indisposition much more formidable than that which I mentioned to you in my last,—a nervous fever; a disorder to which I am subject, and which I dread above all others, because it comes attended by a melancholy perfectly insupportable. This is the first day of my complete recovery, the first in which I have perceived no symptoms of my terrible malady; and the only drawback on this comfort that I feel is the intelligence contained in yours, that neither Mr. King nor yourself are well. I dread

always, both for my own health and for that of my friends, the unhappy influences of a year worn out. But, my dear madam, this is the last day of it; and I resolve to hope that the new year shall obliterate all the disagreeables of the old one. I can wish nothing more warmly than that it may prove a propitious year to you.

My poetical operations, I mean of the occasional kind, have lately been pretty much at a stand. I told you, I believe, in my last, that Homer, in the present stage of the process, occupied me more intensely than ever. He still continues to do so, and threatens, till he shall be completely finished, to make all other composition impracticable. I have, however, written the mortuary verses as usual; but the wicked clerk for whom I write them has not yet sent me the impression. I transmit to you the long-promised Catharina; and were it possible that I could transcribe the others, would send them also. There is a way, however, by which I can procure a frank, and you shall not want them long.

With Mrs. Unwin's best compliments to yourself and Mr. King, together with our joint wishes for his and your complete recovery,

I remain, dearest madam,

Ever yours,

W. C.

Lady Hesketh, though unknown, desires to present her compliments and best wishes to the good and amiable friend of her dear cousin [1].

[1] This P. S. is in Lady Hesketh's hand-writing.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Jan. 4, 1791.

You would long since have received an answer to your last, had not the wicked clerk of Northampton delayed to send me the printed copy of my annual dirge, which I waited to enclose. Here it is at last, and much good may it do the readers!

I have regretted that I could not write sooner, especially because it well became me to reply as soon as possible to your kind enquiries after my health, which has been both better and worse since I wrote last. The cough was cured, or nearly so, when I received your letter, but I have lately been afflicted with a nervous fever, a malady formidable to me above all others, on account of the terror and dejection of spirits that in my case always accompany it. I even looked forward, for this reason, to the month now current, with the most miserable apprehensions, for in this month the distemper has twice seized me. I wish to be thankful however to the sovereign Dispenser both of health and sickness, that, though I have felt cause enough to tremble, he gives me now encouragement to hope that I may dismiss my fears, and expect, for this January at least, to escape it.

* * * * * *

The mention of quantity reminds me of a remark that I have seen somewhere, possibly in Johnson, to this purport,—that the syllables in our language being neither long nor short, our verse accordingly is less beautiful than the verse of the Greeks or Romans, because requiring less artifice in its construction. But

I deny the fact, and am ready to depose on oath, that I find every syllable as distinguishably and clearly either long or short, in our language, as in any other. I know also that without an attention to the quantity of our syllables, good verse cannot possibly be written; and that ignorance of this matter is one reason why we see so much that is good for nothing. The movement of a verse is always either shuffling or graceful, according to our management in this particular, and Milton gives almost as many proofs of it in his Paradise Lost as there are lines in the poem. Away therefore with all such unfounded observations! I would not give a farthing for many bushels of them,—nor you perhaps for this letter. Yet upon recollection, forasmuch as I know you to be a dear lover of literary gossip, I think it possible you may esteem it highly.

Believe me, my dear friend, most truly yours,

W. C.

TO MR. JOHNSON[1].

NOTE BY HAYLEY.

This extract is, in fact, entitled to a much earlier place in the collection; but having a common subject with the concluding paragraph of the preceding Letter, it seemed to call for insertion immediately after it.

I DID not write the line, that has been tampered with, hastily, or without due attention to the construction of

[1] It happened that some accidental reviser of the manuscript had taken the liberty to alter a line in a poem of Cowper's.

it; and what appeared to me its only merit is, in its present state, entirely annihilated.

I know that the ears of modern verse-writers are delicate to an excess, and their readers are troubled with the same squeamishness as themselves. So that if a line do not run as smooth as quicksilver they are offended. A critic of the present day serves a poem as a cook serves a dead turkey, when she fastens the legs of it to a post, and draws out all the sinews. For this we may thank Pope; but unless we could imitate him in the closeness and compactness of his expression, as well as in the smoothness of his numbers, we had better drop the imitation, which serves no other purpose than to emasculate and weaken all we write. Give me a manly, rough line, with a deal of meaning in it, rather than a whole poem full of musical periods, that have nothing but their oily smoothness to recommend them!

I have said thus much, as I hinted in the beginning, because I have just finished a much longer poem than the last, which our common friend will receive by the same messenger that has the charge of this letter. In that poem there are many lines, which an ear, so nice as the gentleman's who made the above-mentioned alteration, would undoubtedly condemn; and yet (if I may be permitted to say it) they cannot be made smoother without being the worse for it. There is a roughness on a plum, which nobody that understands

This liberty drew from the offended poet the following very just and animated remonstrance, which I am anxious to preserve, because it elucidates, with great felicity of expression, his deliberate ideas on English versification.—Hayley.

fruit would rub off, though the plum would be much more polished without it. But lest I tire you, I will only add, that I wish you to guard me from all such meddling; assuring you, that I always write as smoothly as I can; but that I never did, never will, sacrifice the spirit or sense of a passage to the sound of it.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 20, 1791.

HAD you been a man of this world, I should have held myself bound, by the law of ceremonies, to have sent you long since my tribute of condolence. I have sincerely mourned with you; and though you have lost a wife, and I only a friend, yet do I understand too well the value of such a friend as Mrs. Newton, not to have sympathised with you very nearly. But you are not a man of this world; neither can you, who have both the Scripture and the Giver of Scripture to console you, have any need of aid from others, or expect it from such spiritual imbecility as mine. I considered, likewise, that receiving a letter from Mrs. Unwin, you, in fact, received one from myself, with this difference only,—that hers could not fail to be better adapted to the occasion, and to your own frame of mind, than any that I could send you.

You are now, long as it is since I wrote, the first of my correspondents to whom I write, though I am actually in arrear to all. The reason of my insolvency would probably obtrude upon you, even if I did not mention it; but, in justice to myself, it is necessary

for me to say, that in the present stage of my long work, my two great volumes being now in the press, I find letter-writing a difficulty, and indeed almost impracticable. As fast as proof-sheets arrive, which is almost by every post, I am called to consider, for the last time, every line before me with the most exact attention, that the whole may be prepared to meet the eye of the public and critical scrutiny, which I have reason enough to expect will examine me with all the zeal that an ambition to find fault inspires. This state of the matter renders the closest application necessary, and equally necessary it will continue to be,—

Cætera desunt.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, Jan 21, 1791.

I KNOW that you have already been catechized by Lady Hesketh on the subject of your return hither before the winter shall be over, and shall therefore only say that, if you CAN COME, we shall be happy to receive you. Remember also that nothing can excuse the nonperformance of a promise, but absolute necessity! In the mean time my faith in your veracity is such, that I am persuaded you will suffer nothing less than necessity to prevent it. Were you not extremely pleasant to us, and just the sort of youth that suits us, we should neither of us have said half so much, or perhaps a word on the subject.

Yours, my dear Johnny, are vagaries that I shall never see practised by any other; and whether you

slap your ancle, or reel as if you were fuddled, or dance in the path before me, all is characteristic of yourself, and therefore to me delightful. I have hinted to you indeed sometimes, that you should be cautious of indulging antic habits and singularities of all sorts, and young men in general have need enough of such admonition. But yours are a sort of fairy habits, such as might belong to Puck or Robin Goodfellow, and therefore, good as the advice is, I should be half sorry should you take it.

This allowance at least I give you:—continue to take your walks, if walks they may be called, exactly in their present fashion, till you have taken orders. Then indeed, forasmuch as a skipping, curvetting, bounding divine might be a spectacle not altogether seemly, I shall consent to your adoption of a more grave demeanour.

W. C.

TO CLOTWORTHY ROWLEY, ESQ.

Feb. 1, 1791.

You must know, my dear Rowley, that a man having two great volumes in the press is no more master of his time than the greatest man in the kingdom, and therefore, that though I have somewhat delayed my answer, I am clear of the charge to which you plead guilty, the charge of procrastination.

Your expectations that my Homer—or *our* Homer as you kindly call it,—will appear in the middle of this month, it is to be hoped are not very sanguine, because in proportion as they are such you will infal-

libly be disappointed. Not that I have lately had cause to complain of the printer. He proceeds, leisurely indeed, but regularly, and which is still better, very correctly. But it is a bulky business, and will not be accomplished, I presume, till the spring is nearly over. We are now in the eighteenth Iliad. Burke's pamphlet stood in my way when I wrote last; for every press, and consequently mine, groaned with answers to it, so that the old Grecian and his not very young translator were sorely neglected.

You have not, I hope, lost your catalogue of subscribers' names, and you will not, I hope, forget to send them time enough to be inserted in the volume. It will be worth your while to attend to this matter, for as sure as you live if I get them not, I will chronicle them in the last edition of the list by the style and title of *Sixteen Irish, names and sex unknown.* Unless you wish us therefore a laugh at the expense of your present countrymen, I recommend it to you by all means to send them in your next letter, and not to suffer that next letter to be very long in arrear. To tell you a sober truth, I should have been glad to have received them sooner, had it consisted with your procrastinating moods to have sent them; for the first edition of my list is published this very day, annexed to the Analytical Review, and their appearance in it would have gratified me and would have done me honour; would have helped likewise to decoy others, which is the view with which this present list is published.

I rejoice that you look so young. I too, I believe,

am older than I seem, or the ladies flatter me; and why they should, I know not, for I have long since ceased to be worthy of so much favour and goodness at their delicate hands. I would with all my heart that you were not still accompanied by the rheumatism, after so many years cohabitation; but it is better than the gout, and we must have something. *Felicissimus ille qui minimis urgetur.*

I can assure you, my dear old friend, that a journey from Bath hither is not like a journey to the world's end; and the next time you visit the nymph of that spring, I shall hope that you will make the experiment. There is no creature whom I should receive with more true pleasure, for I am most affectionately yours,

WM. COWPER.

Is it possible that you should know anything of a Mr. Kellet, a banker at Cork, and, as I understand, in some sort a relation of mine?

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, The Lodge, Feb. 5, 1791.

My letters to you are all either petitionary, or in the style of acknowledgments and thanks, and such nearly in an alternate order. In my last, I loaded you with commissions, for the due discharge of which I am now to say, and say truly, how much I feel myself obliged to you; neither can I stop there, but must thank you

likewise for new honours from Scotland, which have left me nothing to wish for from that country; for my list is now I believe graced with the subscription of all its learned bodies. I regret only that some of them arrived too late to do honour to my present publication of names. But there are those among them, and from Scotland too, that may give a useful hint perhaps to our own universities. Your very handsome present of Pope's Homer has arrived safe, notwithstanding an accident that befel him by the way. The Hall-servant brought the parcel from Olney, resting it on the pommel of the saddle, and his horse fell with him. Pope was in consequence rolled in the dirt, but being well coated got no damage. If augurs and soothsayers were not out of fashion, I should have consulted one or two of that order, in hope of learning from them that this fall was ominous. I have found a place for him in the parlour, where he makes a splendid appearance, and where he shall not long want a neighbour, one who, if less popular than himself, shall at least look as big as he. How has it happened that, since Pope did certainly dedicate both Iliad and Odyssey, no dedication is found in this first edition of them?

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Feb. 13, 1791.

I CAN now send you a full and true account of this business. Having learned that your inn at Woburn was the George, we sent Samuel thither yesterday. Mr. Martin, master of the George, told him * *

* * * * * * *[1].

W. C.

P. S. I cannot help adding a circumstance that will divert you. Martin having learned from Sam whose servant he was, told him that he had never seen Mr. Cowper, but he had heard him frequently spoken of by the companies that had called at his house, and therefore, when Sam would have paid for his breakfast, would take nothing from him. Who says that fame is only empty breath? On the contrary, it is good ale, and cold beef into the bargain.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston Underwood, Feb. 26, 1791.

It is a maxim of much weight,
Worth conning o'er and o'er,
He who has Homer to translate
Had need do nothing more.

BUT notwithstanding the truth and importance of this apophthegm, to which I lay claim as the original au-

[1] This letter contained the history of a servant's cruelty to a posthorse, which a reader of humanity could not wish to see in print. But the postscript describes so pleasantly the signal influence of a poet's reputation on the spirit of a liberal innkeeper, that it surely ought not to be suppressed.—HAYLEY.

thor of it, it is not equally true that my application to Homer, close as it is, has been the sole cause of my delay to answer you. No. In observing so long a silence I have been influenced much more by a vindictive purpose,—a purpose to punish you for your suspicion that I could possibly feel myself hurt or offended by any critical suggestion of yours, that seemed to reflect on the purity of my nonsense verses. Understand, if you please, for the future, that whether I disport myself in Greek or Latin, or in whatsoever other language, you are hereby, henceforth, and for ever, entitled and warranted to take any liberties with it, to which you shall feel yourself inclined, not excepting even the lines themselves which stand at the head of this letter.

You delight me when you call *blank* verse the English *heroic;* for I have always thought, and often said, that we have no other verse worthy to be so entitled. When you read my Preface you will be made acquainted with my sentiments on this subject pretty much at large; for which reason I will curb my zeal, and say the less about it at present. That Johnson, who wrote harmoniously in rhyme, should have had so defective an ear as never to have discovered any music at all in blank verse, till he heard a particular friend of his reading it, is a wonder never sufficiently to be wondered at. Yet this is true on his own acknowledgment, and amounts to a plain confession, (of which perhaps he was not aware when he made it,) that he did not know how to read blank verse himself. In short, he either suffered prejudice to lead him in a string whithersoever it would, or his taste in poetry

was worth little. I don't believe he ever read any thing of that kind with enthusiasm in his life; and as good poetry cannot be composed without a considerable share of that quality in the mind of the author, so neither can it be read or tasted as it ought to be without it.

I have said all this in the morning fasting, but am soon going to my tea. When therefore I shall have told you that we are now, in the course of our printing, in the second book of the Odyssey, I shall only have time to add, that

I am, my dear friend,
Most truly yours,
W. C.

I think your Latin quotations very applicable to the present state of France. But France is in a situation new and untried before.

END OF VOL. VI.

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